

मराठी तिसरे पुस्तक.

1906.

(बालबोध.)

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व्हर्न्याक्युलरं टेक्स्ट बुक्स रिव्हिजन कमिटीने तयार केले.

I DIAGRESS

Jewel Thief (1967)
Navketan's ANAND

Chaos and राहु

श्वेतकेतु
Dance of Marriage

Kalyug (1981)

July-Aug 2021

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नस्ती उठाठेव : पु ल देशपांडे

Nasti Uthathev



I am committing sacrilege by writing about a Marathi book in Ingrazi (English.) My justification is that I am writing for the off chance that some bilingual person who has lost touch with their roots is inspired to revisit Marathi literature.

After taking that high moral stand, let me come to a book grounded in the Maharashtrian sub-culture. 'Nasti Uthathev' is Pu La Deshpande's early work from the fifties. It may lack the glamour of a 'Batatyachi Chal,' or the depth of 'Ti Phulrani,' or memorable characters like 'Sakharam Gatne,' or the quotable lines that a 'Mi ani Mazha Shatrupaksha' etches in your memory, nor does it take you on a poignant journey like 'Asa mi Asa mi.' Instead, it is a gentle read, easy on the eyes. Reading the book is like taking an archeological excavation into the early evolution of Pu La Deshpande's writing. You experience the sheer landscape covered by his observational gaze.

Pu La is renowned for his sarcasm that is subtle yet powerful. He is like the barber holding the mirror behind you. Very gently showing you what is wrong with the side that you never see and yet, is inseparably yours. He is not in your face. Instead, Pu La gently draws his world, using minute descriptions of the mannerisms of every character. The places in his writings are never mere artifacts of wood or stone; instead, they are an extension of his characters. His world is lively, and yet it is hugely relatable.

Because Pu La has created every inch of his writing from things around us. It is our world, and thus the absurdities in this world must also be ours. Pu La forces us to confront our idiocies, prejudices by establishing our ownership over them. **It is sarcasm at its best.**

In this book, one story showcases this style. It is a short play in which a father-son duo is discussing the son's marriage. The backdrop is created by a journalist who is interviewing the father to start a family profile. Through the interaction with the interviewer, we find that the family lineage is traced back to some of the greatest generals of the Maratha army. With one grandee having fought in the third battle of Panipat. We are drawn into the family history by the narration of historical events and descriptions of portraits and artifacts of the era hanging in the household. The conflict arises when the son says he wants to marry a girl of his choice from the lower strata of society. Besides love, he rationalizes his choice by mentioning that the girl earns more than him (and their family income.) Pu La lets us play on the caste-class angle. He lays out the rationale of both the father and the son. The father trying to hold on to a legacy, and the son looking out for the future. The dose of humor lulls the reader in biasing towards one side (based on personal prejudices and rationale.)

In the final act, Pu La introduces the Shakespearian element of ghosts. Ghosts of the people hanging from the portraits on the walls start participating in the family argument. Herein, we expect the discussion to lead to one of the two available conclusions. But, Pu La engages in subterfuge by blowing up the entire basis for the argument. The Grandee ghost reveals that he was amongst the unidentified martyrs at Panipat. It was an impostor who took his place back home. Whose 'lineage' are you harping on? The 'you' in the question is 'you' -- the reader.

The book is a combination of three plays and ten short stories. The stories are a study in observation and creation of characters. Pu La livens his characters with descriptions of subtle aspects like a limp or an uncanny hairdo. He then spices up the appearance by describing the clothes. From the colors they wear, we are introduced to the colors of their speech.



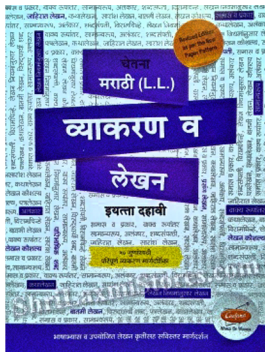
And yet, these fictional characters rarely live in a fictional reality. Their reality is very much our observed reality. When a music teacher is forced to entertain the whims of a rich man's daughter, we understand the economics of talent. It is equally funny and equally sad when the same music teacher sells 'bhel' to make ends meet. Equally, the writer within us is taken on an empathy trip when Pu La regals us with the dilemma of the incomplete novels in the armory of an aspiring novelist.

Plus, since this is, in a way, is period writing, we also get an insight into the life and times of early independent India. Nothing profound, but day-to-day quirks. I got to know from the book that the place 'Katraj' near Pune had a different connotation back then. Today, Katraj is a bustling place, overcrowded, at the intersection of two major highways. However, back then, it must have been a desolate place. From the book, I came to know that Katraj back then was associated with 'foolishness.' एखाद्याचा कातज करणे : to make someone a Katraj meant, to make a fool out of that person.

. Upon doing some research, I realized that this phrase was associated with Shivaji Maharaj's attack on Shaista Khan. After attacking the Khan at Lal Mahal, the returning Maratha soldiers were chased by Mughal soldiers. The smaller Maratha contingent was making its way back to Sinhagad via Katraj. When they reached Katraj, The Maratha men lit fire torches and tied them to bull horns. As the bulls wavered in the darkness, it created an illusion of an army in waiting. The chasing Mughal soldiers were terrified and retreated to their camp.



Maybe an astute student of the Marathi language already knows about the phraseology of Katraj. However, for an English Medium schooler like me, this was news. You see, as I often like to say, English Medium schooling means your English stays at a 'medium' level. Especially for SSC (state board) students, we never learn the depths of English literature — the Wildes and Shakespeares are kept away from us. And if you are Crescentian like me, you are never forced into speaking English at School. Both our spoken English and written vocabulary remains fairly mediocre. To add to our woes, we receive step-motherly treatment from our mother tongue Marathi. We are always taught 'lower' Marathi. Seriously, my SSC exam paper had the words 'Lower Marathi' written in bold at the top. And NO, they did not write the Marathi meaning of the word 'lower'; they typed the word in Devnagri script (लोवर.)



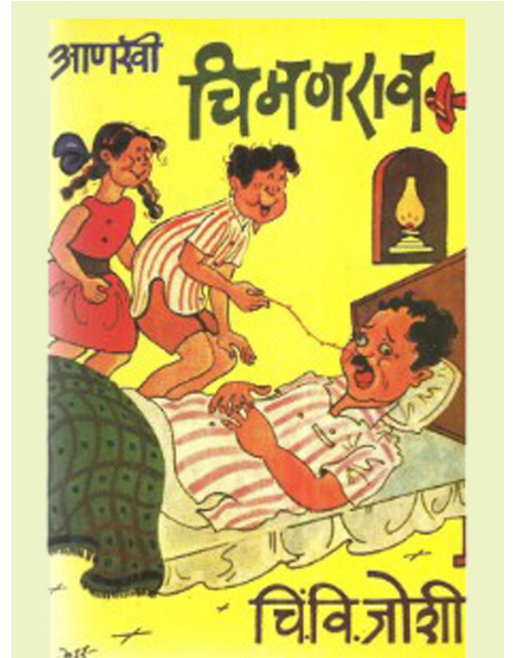
ते L.L म्हणजे लोवर मराठी बरं का !

My classmates still think that Ga Di Madgulkar and William Wordsworth were contemporaries by virtue of being poets. Today some of these lateral thinkers are part of the same system that produced them. In some school in Pune, you might hear the teacher saying, “Adjective clause बरं का.” (translated from Marathi : the thing that comes after Why, is the adjective clause). Such gems are the true legacy of our school. And one of those gems has the audacity of writing about a Marathi book in English.

Back to our book, one story caught my particular attention. In it, Pu La gives a first-hand account of his troubles when he sprains his back. Seeped in humor, strange treatments are offered to him, all based on anecdotal evidence. Each 'nuskha' competing to be more absurd than the previous one. Another writer of the same era has used the same trope. Chi Vi Joshi (Chintaman Joshi) has written a similar account; the difference is that he is afflicted by a case of sour eyes. The pattern is the same; one well-intentioned person after the other imparts wisdom on handling the crisis.

At this point, (abruptly) some amongst you would like to argue over who inspired whom to write an account along similar lines. However, I will not! I am a patient reader and would prefer to enjoy both stories and avoid getting into the nitty-grittys of plagiarism.

In conclusion. True to my Crescentian roots, I began by confessing to a sin and conveniently committed another violation along the way. In case you are wondering, the other book is 'Ankhi Chimanrao' (आणखी चिमणराव) by Chintaman Vinayak Joshi. True to Maharashtrian family ethos, Chi Vi Joshi has dedicated his book to his son and granddaughter's memory. Whereas a young Purushottam Laxman Deshpande preferred to feature a dedication to his Mother. **As if one generation was handing over the baton to the next one.**



the vedas into chaos : rahu

You would have heard the term Rahu Kala (Rahu Kalam) a lot, if not a lot, at least in some movie or some god-fearing grandmother scaring you with it. This Rahu Kala or the Rahu's operating period during a day brings fear in many. It is the time of the day that is under the control of Rahu- the dreadful. Swarbhanu - was his name in an earlier avatar.

Now, Swarbhanu doesn't sound that dreadful, but he was the same. In the Vedas, one can see the growth of these gods, say; in Rigved an X God has 2-3 qualities, same God will get additional 2-3 qualities in the later Vedas. So they treat it as a newly obtained revelation about the same God. Swarbhanu, even in his earlier days, was after the Sun, even eclipsing him then.

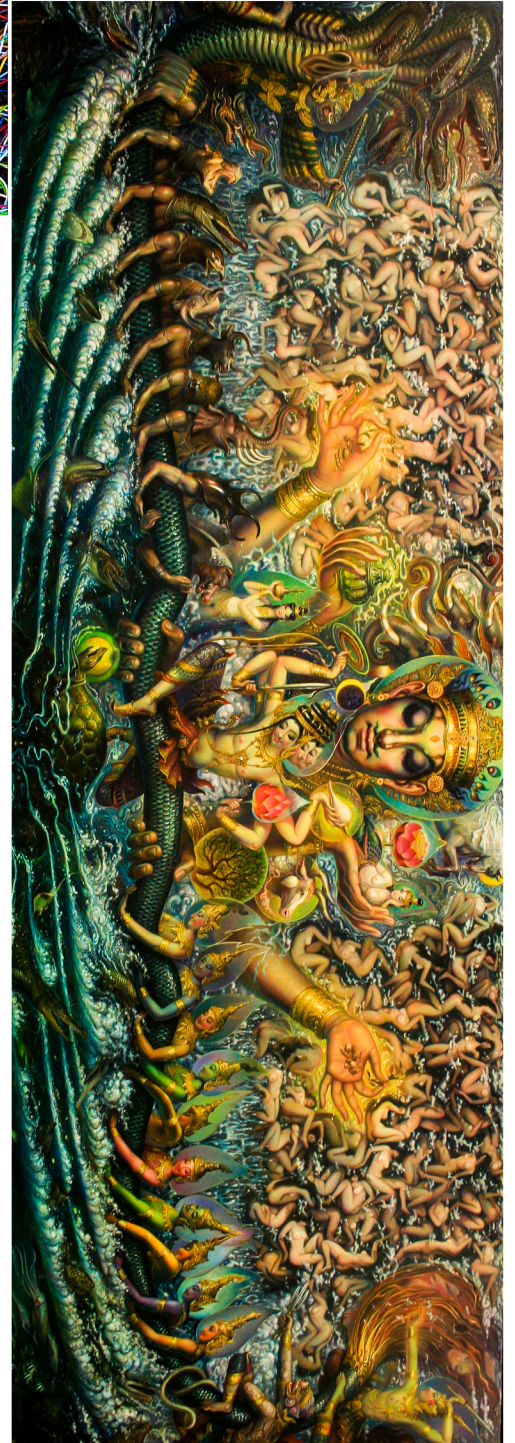
All this was before the Samudra Manthan. Samudra Manthan is one of the most critical events mentioned in the Puranas. This event has many parallels in various other ancient world stories, especially in the Norse Mythology. The need of Samudra Manthan rose as follows:

Once Indra inadvertently insulted Rishi Durvasa. The Rishi had gifted him Garland, which Indra gave to his elephant Airavat, who threw it to the ground due to the bees on the Garland. The dumping of the gift enraged the short-tempered Rishi, and he cursed Indra to lose all that he has. Cut to — War between the Asura and Devas in which the Devas get battered and lost everything they had.

Cut to — Vishnu's court: the Devas led by Indra reach there to plead his help. Vishnu suggests they approach it diplomatically. Upon exploring, they find Samudra Manthan as a possible method to regain lost wealth. However, to achieve this, astronomical feat, the support of the Asuras is compulsory.

Cut to— Vast beach of the Kshirsagar. Both eternal inimical parties deal out the details. Mount Mandar placed on Kurma back with Vasuki tied around the Mandar to churn the Ocean. Cut to— The emerged Amrut filled Pot was ready for distribution. That summarises the need for the Samudra Manthan.

Samudra Manthan
Prateep Khotchabua,
Churning the milk of ocean.
Oil on canvas
011, MOCA, Bangkok, Thailand



Cut to — Deva and Asura sitting in a straight line, like the nursery kids, being offered Amrut by none other than Mohini. Starting with the Devas, Mohini poured Amrut, planning to finish it before it reaches the Asura. Smart Swarbhanu knowing the slight-handed nature of Devas, disguised himself as Deva, gatecrashed Deva's queue, and sat next to Sun and Moon. Sun Moon outed Swarbhanu as Asura, just as Mohini had offered him the Amrut. Immediately Vishnu, with his Sudarshan Chakra, slit Swarbhanu's throat, but by then, he had gulped the Amrut, achieving immortality. This act left Swarbhanu in two pieces, head -Rahu and rest body-Ketu.



That's his story, there may be few variations, but the crux is that during Manthan, Asuras and Devas worked together to get the jewels of the universe. The Devas tried to hog the Amrut for themselves, which Swarbhanu realized and tried to outwit the Devas; he succeeded, but with a catch.

That was the linear part of Indian storytelling. The concepts, thoughts underlying a large part of the story depend on the reader's capacity to ponder and think

A few seers and sages have thought and pondered for our benefit, and they have shared many layers that such stories try to tell. These stories form the basis of Jyotish. Through it, we learn what this particular planet means, intends, and has potential. Rahu and Ketu are some of the most challenging planets to judge, understand and interpret.

Of the split Rahu Ketu, I will limit just to Rahu. Like we all know, Rahu is the dreadful one. He is, after all, an asura, so by definition, we should dread him. He has always been fighting against Sun, eclipsing him, the hearth of our solar system.

Rahu has the rights over Kaliyug. Greed-associated with Kaliyug imbibed in Rahu. By not waiting for his turn to drink Amrut- He showed his greediness. Maya, another word associated with Kaliyug, is again connected to Rahu. He disguised himself (as Maya) to sit amongst the devas and drank the Amrut. Rahu thus represents the faculty to transform, to take a form of another, cause the illusion. Persons who can apply this ability to transform are spies, movie actors, thieves, and politicians. Rahu is the king of diplomacy; thus, all diplomats come under his realm.

Rahu saw what the deceit the Devas had planned and could act thereupon. Rahu could see that Mohini is none other than Vishnu himself, proving he can see through Maya. Rahu's ability to see through the Maya is beneficial and makes him a unique planet for Kaliyug. Along with the skill to create an illusion, he holds the potential to break through that illusion too. Rahu did not share the info with other Asuras; this makes him self-centered, a quick thinker, and independent.

The more one will read that story in detail, the more one learns about Rahu and his importance in this era

Other stories in the Puranas also shed light on Rahu. Remember, he gulps the Sun without actually touching it. Again this is Maya, but his Maya casts long shadows on us earthlings.

Rahu is hyper-intelligent, extremely good at setting goals, and being hyper-motivated to reach those. But, he is just a 'head without a body; his thirst/greed has no bottom. Nothing satiates him. Once he sets a goal, he starts to consume; there is no end to it. There is nothing that can set one free from his grip.

Rahu, as good as he sounds, is terrible just for the same reasons. Rahu is 'the ill of excesses.' He can set extraordinary goals and keep you motivated like nothing else, but all that is just a mindless rush, and the worst part is that he cannot guarantee those goals. That's the illusion he creates; it may fool people around, but when the time comes, his Maya breaks. He never got what he wanted despite all the effort he put in. Rahu is the classic case of "haath aaya muh na lagaa" He will surely take you to the highest position, close to the goal, but deprive you of it, so much so that it will remain as a lifelong scar.

You will notice many people reaching a high position with a lot of gala, fame, etc., around them, and then from the top position, they fall into the depths of anonymity, nadirs of disgrace. The prime example would be Trump, Jupiter gave him the high position, but Rahu dumped him hard. Rahu is an excruciatingly lousy teacher. He etches his lessons on the soul, which one carries from one life to another. Remember Rahu is the reason (at least denotes) why we are born.

Rahu undoubtedly gives you fame, can make you Trump, or some great Guru like Bhaktivendata Prabhupada, some great actor, or a famous spy like Mata Hari. But, Rahu has energies that are most difficult to handle. Hence most times, his path is terrible. The intelligent fundamentalists fit into these categories, who know exactly how to twist and manipulate to cause maximum damage. India has many godmen behind bars, which are again the best examples of Rahu gone awry on the path of spirituality. The evil genius of Rahu is his duality. It can make you highly spiritual and riddle you with materialism, avarice for cliched ***tan man dhan***.

Rahu can thus take one on rollercoaster life, extremes being the keywords here. He is like Lenka's song *'Everything at once,'* where his desires know no bounds, and they want to be whatever the mind can imagine. This power to imagine makes Rahu expand things to the vastness of the universe or shrink it to the size of atoms. Remember, he gambled life for immortality; he got it but lost it too.

That's what he is, either highest position or lowest position. There is nothing in between where he can work.

There is much more to speak about Rahu, and again that all will be just scratching the surface. There is a lot to learn from that story, but I leave that to the reader's wisdom. Just remember he is a black hole, with no bottom.



Dear Reader,

We do not in any way endorse or promote Astrology.

Our intention is simply to explore the stories and philosophies that underline those stories. All we hope to achieve is “an interesting read”

warm regards



Jewel Thief is one of those movies I patiently watch from start to end without forwarding scenes or jumping songs. The fruit of the whole exercise is in that one scene when Shalini (Vyjayantimala) tells Vinaay (Dev Anand), "तुम्हें अभी तक मालूम नहीं हुआ !!!" (You still have not realized !!)

Dev Anand is his usual in the whole film — larger than life, supersmart, intellectual — Sherlockian. And, in that one scene, the entire edifice collapses. The scene is well into the last quarter of the movie. Afterward, you have another fifteen minutes wherein an attempt is made to close all the loops. But, the left uppercut was already delivered, and we are just going through the motions of tabulating the scores.

In Hindi movies, it is rare to destroy the intellect of a lead character and show him utterly outwitted. The villain, Arjun, deftly played by Ashok Kumar, weaves a net of deception. Flawless and exciting.

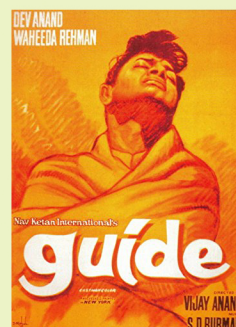
More recently, in the BBC series Sherlock, we saw a similar game played by Moriarty. In 'The Reichenbach Fall,' Moriarty deceives Sherlock to his core. A completely flummoxed Sherlock is out-witted and out-played by the villain. However, the creators had to ruin the whole feeling by adding another season to the series. An exercise that can shame the skill-fullest of acrobats was undertaken to show how Sherlock already had a Plan B in place. A despicable try to save Sherlock's 'mastermind' image.

Not here, gentlemen,,,In Jewel Thief, there is no redeeming for Dev Anand. He is thoroughly out-played. Vinaay and Shalini later manage to concoct a way to arrest Arjun. But, we all know who has won the battle of wits and who is taking home the consolation prize.

NavKetan's ANAND

The Anand brothers — Actor Dev and Director Vijay, through their banner 'Navketan Films,' have given some of the most memorable films. Navketan gave us notable films like Johnny Mera Naam, Nau Do Gyarah, Tere Mera Sapne, to name a few. Also, how can anyone forget the iconic 'Guide.' Navketan is a key pillar of Indian cinema history. Spanning three decades, from the fifties to the seventies, Navketan was synonymous with Dev Anand in the lead role. The production house was built around the stardom of Dev Anand. Yet, the banner refused to rely solely on the celebrity of its lead. They always chased good stories. Today's stars can learn a trick or two from the Anand enterprise. Navketan model was to backload the fees for its star. Dev Anand's payout was entirely from the profits post the release of the film. This freed up budgets for the film's shooting. In sharp contrast, these days, the fees for a star weigh more than sixty percent of a film's budget. This leaves minimal legroom in accommodating the supporting cast and music choices. The economics dictate that the songs need to constantly showcase the movie's USP - its star. The overall package suffers. Whereas in the Navketan model, budgetary room allowed top-notch actors like Ashok Kumar to be roped in. The music could stay true to the film's theme. The songs ran complementary to the story.

When "Hothon pe aisi baat main dabake chali aayi" plays on screen, you are riveted. The song is the perfect example of what flavor a song can add to your storytelling. The lyrics, the visuals, the drama laid out by the music is pure enjoyment. Jewel Thief is that — pure enjoyment.





Despite our thesis against star culture, the paradox is that 'Jewel Thief' works due to the stardom of Dev Anand. The creators play upon the preconceived notions of the audience. When it comes to a star, the audience always views him through a certain persona. Dev Anand is the affable star we know. He is charming, smart, and larger than life. When we sit for 'Jewel Thief' we hold on to this persona and impose it on Dev Anand's Vinaay. He is a top-notch jeweler with a deep knowledge of rare stones. His accounting skills are off the chart as he routinely saves thirty to forty percent for his employer. His deduction skills outshine the policemen he is working with. He is laying the trap for the world's most elusive Jewel Thief - Amar. Dev Anand is always the most competent person in the room. The movie never lets us discard this notion. Thus when the plot twist arrives out of the blue, we are left shell-shocked.

I still recollect the first time I heard "नहीं, नहीं..", the echo reverberated within me for the next five minutes—a truly 'Wow' moment. I was lucky to experience this hair-raising moment in the confines of a theater, at a festival organized in Pune to commemorate fifty years of Dev Sahab's cinema. I wish more such festivals are arranged to enjoy the classics the way they should be. When you are the prisoner of your seat, transfixed to the screen, it is 'an' experience. After all, can a 360-degree virtual reality headset replace the thrill of a roller coaster!

Everyone hails 'Guide' as the benchmark Vijay-Dev Anand film. I do like 'Guide,' however, I love 'Jewel Thief' when it comes to entertainment. Dev Anand's films like Baazi, CID, Nau Do Gyarah, Johnny Mera Naam, Hare Rama Hare Krishna are the films you enjoy. On a tiring day, Dev Anand is your go-to guy if you want some magical relief. Many feel that once the suspense is revealed, a movie loses its thrill; however, 'Jewel Thief' never loses its novelty. Because, ultimately, it is a good story. So the next time you have a couple of hours for yourself, sit back, stay away from the forward button, and just enjoy the film.



Department of Public Instruction, Bombay.

मुंबई इलाख्यातील सरकारी विद्याशाळाखाती.

मराठी तिसरें पुस्तक.

(बालबोध.)

व्हर्नाक्युलर टेक्स्ट बुक्स रिव्हिजन कमिटीने तयार केलें.

MARATHI THIRD BOOK.

Prepared

BY

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किंमत ६ आणे.

1906.

आपली स्मरणशक्ती फार फसवी असते. मागच्याच रविवारी दामूच्या लग्नात खाल्लेला मेणू आठवत नाही, पण लहानपणी रक्षेचे पैसे जोडून खाल्लेल्या मस्तानीची पचक्षणात जिभेवर येते. कोथरूडच्या उद्यानाला मी निदान पंधरा वीस वेळा गेलो असेल, पण मला आठवते ती आनवी तिसरीतली सहल.

पुल म्हणूनच गेले आहेत, मुंबई आणि पुणे हे सोडून जगात पाहण्यासारखे तरी काय आहे! आमच्या शाळेने पुलेंच्या या वाक्याला आपले ब्रीदवाक्य बनवले होते. मुंबईला जाणे महाराष्ट्र, म्हणून आपले कधी बंद गार्डन, कधी जंगली महाराज मंदिर, पेशवे पार्क, शनिवारवाडा — ही आमची सहलीची ठिकाणे.

असो, मूळ मुद्दा काय, तर आठवणी. शाळेतले किस्से असे आठवतात जसे परवाच झालेले आहेत. त्याचा एक गोठा भाग आहे शाळेतले शिक्षक, त्यांनी शिकवलेले विषय, त्या विषयांची पुस्तके आणि त्या पुस्तकातले काही

विशेष अध्याय. आमच्या चौथीत इंग्रजीसाठी महाराष्ट्र बोर्ड ऐवजी दिल्ली बोर्डचे पुस्तक होते — गुलमोहर (का विचार नका, उत्तर माहित नाही). त्या पुस्तकातल्या दोन गोष्टी मला कायमच्या लक्षात राहिल्या आहेत. एक सिंदबादची गोष्ट होती आणि दुसरी ब्लॅक ब्युटी नावाच्या घोड्याची. सिंदबादच्या गोष्टीत एक मोठा गोल दगड होता, ज्याच्या अवती-भवती फिरून सिंदबाद त्या दगडाचे वर्णन करत राहतो. द्विस्ट हा होता की, तो दगड नसून एका मोठ्या पक्ष्याचे अंडे होते.

त्या दगडरूपी अंड्याचे वर्णन — एक वेगळीच जादुई मजा होती.

दुसरी गोष्ट ब्लॅक ब्युटीची; ती काय मला आठवत नाही. फक्त एवढेच आठवते की सुरवातीला घोड्याचे एक सुंदर स्केच होते. अजूनही एम्प्रेस गार्डन वरून जाताना एखादा काळा घोडा दिसला तर माझ्या मनात त्या घोड्याचे नाव ब्लॅक ब्युटीच येते.

शंभर वर्षांपूर्वीच्या विद्यार्थ्यांच्या मनात पण अशाच काही गोष्टी घर करत असतील का?

१९०६ साली प्रकाशित झालेल्या मराठीच्या शालेय पुस्तकात अशाच काही रंजक गोष्टी आहेत. आज त्या वाचून, त्या काळाच्या विद्यार्थ्यांच्या मनात काय चालले असेल, ही कल्पना करण्यात मजा आहे. साहित्य ही काळाची दुर्बीण असते. भारत अजून स्वतंत्र झालेला नाही, इंग्रजांनी 'बाबू' बनवण्यासाठी आखलेली शिक्षणपद्धत, त्यात शिकणारा एक मराठी मुलगा. त्याच्या मनात काय चालले असेल?

मराठीचे तिसरे पुस्तक 'बालबोध' हे बहुदा इयत्ता तिसरी मधल्या मुलांसाठी असेल.

पुस्तकाचा व्याप मराठी कथा आणि कविता पासून भूगोलाला वळसा घालतो. पुस्तकाचा शेवट सृष्टिज्ञान आणि पदार्थावरणाने होतो. हल्ली भूगोल म्हणजे, कुठे काळी माती कुठे लाल, पिकांचे प्रकार, दगडांचे वर्गीकरण, नद्यांची नवे, असे एकदम निरस पद्धतीने शिकवले जाते. सामान्य ज्ञानाचा विषय आहे की भूगोलाचा हे कळत नाही. पण, शंभर वर्षांपूर्वी भूगोल हा ट्रॅव्हल ब्लॉग सारखा शिकवल्या जात होता, हे बघून माझे डोळे फिरले. आमच्या नशिबात हीसेने समुद्रकिनारी बसणारा नूरमहंमदास का न्हवता? त्याला समुद्रातून आलेला मासा, सागर आणि महासागर मधला फरक समजून सांगतो. असे ज्ञान मिळाल्यावर नूरमहंमदासचा पुढे जाऊन नुरसाहेब का नाही होणार. आम्हाला मात्र कधी समुद्र न पाहिलेले शिक्षक, कोणता समुद्र किती खोल, हे काठीच्या तालावर वदवून घेत होते.

कुठे सहल गेली तर परत आल्यावर सहलीचे वर्णन पॉईंट-वाईस लिहिण्याचा गृहपाठ रुपी अत्याचार आम्ही भोगला आहे. तिकडे किसनला मात्र अत्यंत प्रेमाने जेजुरीला नेणारे त्याचे बाबा. जेजुरी कशी वाटी प्रमाणे आहे, तिच्या वायव्येकडेचे सासवड, नैऋत्येचे कडेपठार, असे दाखवल्या वर कोणाच्या लक्षात नाही राहणार! डोंगर-दरीचा भूगोल, दिशांचा परिचय, डोक्यात एकदम पक्का. नाहीतर आम्ही, आमच्या साठी जेजुरी म्हणजे पुण्याच्या थोडा खाली एक छोटासा 'टिम्ब.'

असो, स्वातंत्र्यात निरागस भूगोल शिकणे की पारतंत्र्यात हौशीचा भूगोल शिकणे, हे काय एकमेकांचे पर्याय होऊ शकत नाही.

एकंदरीत त्या वेळेची सगळी पुस्तकपद्धती इंग्रजांच्या सेन्सॉरशिप खाली असणार, त्यात स्वातंत्र्यवादी विचारांना आळा घालण्याचे काम मोठ्या प्रमाणात करणे, हे साहजिकच आहे. ज्ञान सुद्धा द्यायचे, नैतिक शिक्षण, हुशारीला प्रोत्साहन, पण स्वतंत्र विचारांवर बंदी घालणे, ही त्यांची तारेवरची कसरत.

ते पाहून, त्यास धरण्यासाठी टपून वसलेला कोळी तेथे धावून आला, आणि त्याने त्याला ठार मारून खाऊन टाकिले.

महोदय गर्वाने फुगतो तेव्हा त्याला असे वाटते की, “माझ्यापेक्षा मोठा कोणी नाही.” पण ते मूर्खपण होय. जगात शेराला सवाशेर असतोच, ह्याकरिता शाह्याण्याने कधी गर्व करू नये.

२३. खरे बोलणारा मुलगा जार्ज वॉशिंग्टन.

अमेरिका म्हणून एक मोठे खंड फार दूर आहे. तेथे जार्ज वॉशिंग्टन नावाचा एक थोर उरुप होऊन गेला. तो सहा वर्षांचा असता त्याला कोणीपकाने एक लहानशी कुन्हाड बक्षीस दिली. तिचा त्याला मोठा हर्ष झाला; आणि ती कशी चालते, हे पाहण्यासाठी तो ती ज्यावर त्यावर हाणीत घुटला. असा फिरता फिरता सहज तो आपल्या घरा-शेजारच्या वागेत गेला. तेथे त्याच्या बापाच्या आवडीचे एक फळझाड होते, त्यावर आपली कुन्हाड चालवून त्याची साल त्याने तासिली. त्यामुळे ते झाड जायवंदी झाले.

दुसरे दिवशी त्याचा बाप वागेत गेल्यावर, त्या झाडाची ती अवस्था पाहून त्याला अतिशय वाईट वाटले. तो म्हणाला, “मला कोणी शंभर रुपये दिले असते, तरी हे झाड मी त्याला दिले नसते.” झाडाची तशी दुर्दशा कोणी केली ह्या-विषयी तो आपल्या चाकरमाण्यांत शोध करू लागला. परंतु, ते कोणाला डाऊक नव्हते, त्यामुळे कांहीएक पत्ता लागेना.

इतक्यांत जार्ज हा ती कुन्हाड घेऊन, खेळत खेळत वागेत



तासिले.” हे शब्द ऐकून बापास मोठा गद्दिवर आला. त्याने जार्जने ह्यास जवळ घेऊन त्याच्या पाठीवरून हात फिरविला, आणि म्हणजे, “मुला, कांही चिंता नाही! झाडाची बिशात काय? तू खरे बोललास ह्याने मला असली हजार झाडे मिळाल्याचा संतोष झाला आहे! ह्याच्या पानांची आणि

आला. त्याला बापांने विचारिले, “काय रे जार्ज, ही झाडाची साल कोणी तासिली, ते तुला डाऊक आहे काय?” ते ऐकून जार्ज अमळ गोंधळला, आणि थोडा वेळ स्तब्ध राहून, मान खाली घालून, बापास म्हणाला, “बाबा, माझ्याने खोटे बोलवत नाही. मीच आपल्या कुन्हाडीने हे झाड

सोन्याच्या फुलांची अशी शेंकडी झाडे मिळण्यापेक्षा, हे तुझे खरे बोलणे मला अधिक मोलाचे वाटत आहे!”

हा मुलगा मोठा झाल्यावर आपल्या ह्या गुणाने, एक एक पायरी चढत चढत, आपल्या देशाचा मुख्य अधिकारी झाला. मुलांने, “माझ्याने खोटे बोलवत नाही,” असे जार्ज हा जसे म्हणाला, तसे जर तुम्हां सर्वांच्याने नेहमी म्हणवेल, तर किती बरे चांगले होईल!

जो मुलगा सर्वदा खरे बोलतो, आणि कोणास कधी ठकवीत नाही, तो सगळ्या माणसांस आवडतो आणि देवासही आवडतो.

२४. गुरुसेवा.

घगदाद एथे मासून नावाचा एक मोठा वैभवशाली खलीफा होऊन गेला. तो स्वता मोठा विद्वान असून विद्वान लोकांचा पुरस्कर्ता होता. त्याने फरी नावाच्या एका पंडितास आपल्या दोन मुलांना शिकविण्यासाठी शिक्षक नेमिले. एके दिवशी फरी त्या मुलांना पाठ देत असता कांही कामाकरिता आपल्या बैठकीवरून उठून बाहेर जाऊ लागला. ते पाहताच दोघेही मुलगे आपल्या गुरुचे जोडे त्याच्यापुढे नेऊन देवण्यास धावले. जोडे होते तेथे ते दोघेही एकाच वेळेस जाऊन पोहोचले. प्रत्येकास गुरुचे जोडे गुरुपुढे नेऊन देवण्याची कामगिरी आपण एकद्वयानेच करावी असे वाटून, तसे करण्याकरिता ते एकमेकांशी झगडू लागले. शेवटी, प्रत्येकांने एक जोडा गुरुपुढे

अशा कचाट्यात अडकलेल्या पुस्तक लेखकाकडे एक उत्तम पळवाट म्हणजे, बाहेरच्या गोष्टींचे अनुवाद करून लिहिणे. बायबलचा न्यायाधीशाच्या भूमिकेत सोलोमन, मराठी पुस्तकात पेशवाई पद्धतीने बाळ दोन तुकड्यात कापा सांगतो, तेव्हा तो नकळतपणे पाश्चात्य विचारांचा शिरकाव भारतीय मनात करतोय — असा समाज इंग्रजी सरकार करत असेल. बाहेरचे जास्त खायला घातले की ग्रच्या मटणाची चव जाते.

पण ज्याला आपण इंग्रजीमध्ये ‘आयरोनी’ आणि मराठीत विडंबन म्हणतो, ते जीवनाचा अपरिहार्य भाग आहे. बाहेरच्या गोष्टी आत घेताना एक गोष्ट या पुस्तकात चोरवाटेने शिरते, ती म्हणजे जार्ज वॉशिंग्टनची एक गोष्ट. बाळ जार्जने बक्षीस मिळालेल्या कुन्हाडीचा प्रयोग बाबांच्या आवडत्या फळझाडाची साले तासण्यात केला. जार्जच्या बाबांना परत आल्यावर गद्दिवर आले, कोणी शंभर रुपये दिले असते तरी हे झाड मी कोणाला दिले नसते (त्या काळचे शंभर, आत्ताचे दहा लाख तरी पकडा. डॉलर कि रुपये हा शोधाचा विषय राहील.)

त्यांनी जार्जला विचारले, तुला माहित आहे का कोणी केले आहे, हे असे? जार्ज अमळ गोंधळाला, पण तरी त्याने सत्याची साथ सोडली नाही आणि कबुली दिली. जार्जचे सत्यवचनी रूप पाहून त्याच्या बाबांना अजूनच गद्दिवर आले. त्याचे बाबा भारतीय नसल्यामुळे त्यांना, “मेल्या, गाढवा” असे शब्द माहित नव्हते, त्यामुळे त्यांनी जार्जच्या सत्यवादीपणाची प्रशंसा केली आणि झाडाला विसरून गेले.

आता जार्जचा गावठी जार्ज जरी झाला असेल तरी ती

गोष्ट वाचणाऱ्या मुलाला हा प्रश्न तर नक्कीच पडणार. हा वॉशिंग्टन नक्की आहे तरी कोण? तेव्हा गूगल नव्हते म्हणून उत्तर शोधणे सोपे नसेल, पण तरी प्रयत्नांती परमेश्वर, कोणाला ना कोणाला जार्ज वॉशिंग्टनची संपूर्ण कहाणी कळलीच असेल. तेव्हा आपला जार्ज हा तोच जार्ज आहे, ज्याने आपल्या अमेरिका नावाच्या देशातून इंग्रजांना पळवून लावले आणि आपला देश स्वतंत्र केला, हे सत्य तिसरीतल्या त्या चिमुकल्या मनाला कळाले असेल. मग त्याच्या सत्यवचनी प्रेरणा तर आलीच असेल, पण त्याच बरोबर जार्जचे बाकीचे धोरण पण अंगी घ्याची प्रेरणा मिळाली असेल — **हीच ती आयरोनी.**

असो, शालेय आठवणीं कशा दैनंदिन जीवनात घर करून टाकतात हा आपला विषय.

१९०६ सालचे हे पुस्तक किंवा याची आवृत्ती एका लहान चिंतामण जोशीने तर वाचले असेलच ना. कारण जेव्हा हा चिंतामण पुढे जाऊन लेखक ची. वि. जोशी बनतो, तेव्हा तो या सत्यवादी जार्जला विसरत नाही.

आपले चिमणराव हे पात जेव्हा आपल्या बायकोशी चूक कोणाची आहे या विषयावर भांडते, तेव्हा ते चिमणराव आपल्या लहानपणचा किस्सा सांगतात. लहानपणी जमदग्नीचे अवतार असलेल्या बाबांच्या पुस्तकात जेव्हा आपण चूक केली तेव्हा ती चूक काबुल करण्याचे धारिष्ट्य दाखवले होते. आपण चूक केली तर काबुल करतो हे सांगणारे चिमणराव सहज एक वाक्य बोलून जातात, “तुला सांगतो काऊ, मला वाटते त्या जॉर्ज वॉशिंग्टन नंतर मीच तसा दुसरा.”

जॉर्ज वॉशिंग्टनचा प्रवास पुस्तका पर्यंत थांबत नाही.

पुढे मराठी दूरदर्शन च्या पहिल्या मालिकेत (१९७७; चिमणराव गुंड्याभाऊ), दिलीप प्रभावळकर चिमणरावच्या भूमिकेत पुन्हा त्या जॉर्ज वॉशिंग्टनला उचकी देतात.

पारतंत्र्यात अडकलेल्या लेखकाला ही कल्पना तरी असेल का, की इयत्ता तिसरीच्या पुस्तकात लिहिलेले आपली दोन वाक्य लोकप्रिय संस्कृतीचा भाग होऊन स्वातंत्र्याच्या मुक्त हवेत दरवाळतील. पुढे ते पुस्तक आणि तो अभ्यासक्रम नाहीशे झाले, जॉर्ज वॉशिंग्टन मराठीच्या पुस्तकातून इतिहासाच्या पुस्तकात लढा चालू ठेवायला गेला. पण त्याचा किस्सा मात्र बोली भाषेत राहिला. आठवणींचा वारसा कसा पुढे जाईल, ही एक अजबच गममत आहे.

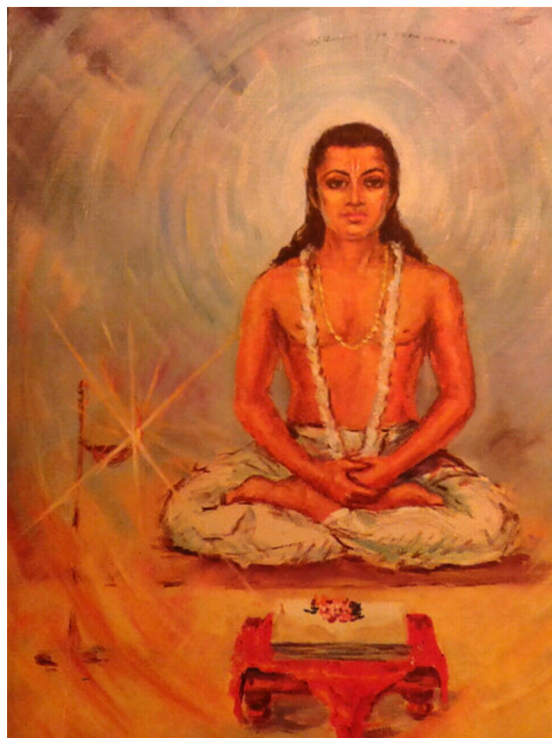


मराठी मालिका : चिमणराव गुंड्याभाऊ, १९७९, दूरदर्शन

Karma is not Justice

India seriously a weird land, to understand it, or even get the feeling that you are understanding a bit of it, would be a very bold statement. I don't remember who said it, but described it precisely, *"Anything you say about India, the opposite is also true"* experience, and when we add a continuous cultural existence of over nine thousand years, it all becomes way too much to handle in one life time. One would expect to be aware of the sheer collective wisdom it has accumulated, but exactly opposite is true. Despite India being an ancient civilisation, we hardly know the meaning of principles and the underlying ideologies that India introduced to the world.

Most of our own philosophy has gone to the West and returned to us with Abrahamic colours. We learn our own philosophy with western logic, which will never lead to any realisation. Think this as eating roti with fork or chopstick and wonder why one would make such an odd food item which is hard to eat with fork/chopstick. As logical logic sounds, logic can never help nor lead one on the path of liberation. Generations (over the last 1000 years) accepted the dominance of logic and



are attempting to understand core Vedic philosophy through the logical lens, struggling and stumbling but going nowhere. Perhaps Einstein's logic might come here handy, one should not expect different result doing the same thing over and over again.

Take the logical concepts, Justice and Equality, which we all hold dear. But have you ever given a thought to what these values are? What do they even mean? Justice is a vague, abstract idea. Can a thief imprisoned for, say, ten years for stealing one kilogram gold be considered as Justice? Can a life sentence for murdering someone be Justice? Or can forgiving the thief or the murderer be okay? What is the basic understanding of all this?

Hammurabi wrote an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth as law, intending the Sense of Justice. Thus arose the concept of punishment to serve Justice. This works when a crime, defined by society, occurs. Punishment gives rise to the idea of forgiveness. Many debates have spawned from the see-saw-natured relationship between punishment-forgiveness. This sense of Justice is limited to humanity; what

about Justice in the animal kingdom. Simple Suffering is the only grievance.

The Vedic philosophy remains just to this concept, all there is, is Suffering, there is as such no justice. Look at what Pandavas had to go through to establish Dharma. Despite the perceived good act, they lost their progeny. Ram destroyed the trans-universal villain Ravan, ushered in Ramrajya, and yet suffered the painful separation from his wife. Where is the Justice?

Vedic philosophy nowhere uses this concept of Justice. For Justice, we need an ever prevailing almighty. A God (a doctrine) is necessary to impart Justice; he needs to define what is wrong, what is deemed correct, and so forth. Vedas never enter the path of declaring anything right or wrong. It comes up with a complex concept of Karma.

Our generation conflates Karma with Justice. As if Karma is some entity assigned the duty of settling scores. Colloquially this entity has a form, as they say: Karma is a Bitch.

However, in its Vedic roots, Karma is never Justice.

This misconception has led us to believe that Chitragupt imparts Justice to souls by assigning them Hell or Heaven. This oversimplification is laden western thought. At its core, Chitragupt can best be described as an accountant. A bookkeeper who tracks a person's Karmic balance sheet. If the credit/debit statement is zero, a soul has a balanced Karma and is deemed fit for liberation. Any imbalance, the soul has to go through another cycle of birth and death.

And here is a prime example of the deceptive nature of Karma. Even when we simplify Karma as a balance sheet, we fail to grasp its complexity. A lay mind would immediately start to think that any debts in the balance sheet need a repayment. But Karma doesn't work that way.

Here is a simple example. You give alms to a beggar. This action has two consequences, one, you committed a

you committed a good deed. Two, the beggar is indebted to you for your help. When the time comes, you are rewarded for your good deeds; you get your deeply desired car as a reward. Your good deed got balanced with a prize, but your Karmic balance sheet is still not zero. It will not turn zero until the indebted beggar pays off their debt to you.

Just think about the multitudes of people you have interacted with. Each interaction has created Karma that needs balancing. By now, you must have figured out that one life is not enough for attaining balance. Hence, re-birth and Karmic philosophy go hand in hand.

All Indian traditions, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, grapple with the idea of Karma in their own way. The Wheel in our flag symbolises the Karmic cycle of birth and re-birth. Each tradition tried to analyse Karma from a unique perspective. Can we say which one is right or which one is wrong? Rather, do we have the capacity to make any such definitive statement! We Don't.

However, this is certain, None of the Indian traditions try to box Karma into the concept of action and consequence. They do not see Karma as a mechanism of Universal Justice.

In a simple action and consequence system, you control your good deeds, and you may control your rewards for it. But, like in our example, who controls the beggar, when does the beggar pay off debts to you?

Hopefully, you have understood that Karma is not simple. And any system that emerges out from a Karmic belief is never straightforward. To understand Karma takes many lifetimes. So the next time someone advises you to do a certain pooja to get the next job, be a bit skeptical.



karma is itself the fruit



Limited Sci-Fi Series

Watching this series, I learned a new term, 'limited-series.' You see, we had two distinctions with stories on the screen, to begin with. One was at a three-hour-long format called the Movie. When stories were 'too long to fit in a movie format, we had the serial — Typically, thirteen or twenty-six half-hour episodes telecasted every week on Doordarshan. Then came the epics, hour-long episodes, running for around a hundred weeks. Do not associate epics with mythology/history-based shows; even 'Chandrakanta' was termed an epic. After story-based content, we moved into non-story-based content. You know that a story has an arc that will eventually get completed, and hence we get a limit on the number of episodes for the show. With non-story-based content, we can stretch the line to infinity; thus, we got the 'daily soap.'

The problem with daily soaps is that the show's cast is entirely engaged for the show's duration. So, these actors are unable to work on different projects and stay committed to one show. For established actors, this is an unattractive proposition. To enable established actors to be cast on television, the concept of 'seasons' was formulated. Serials that run in a slot of two to three months every year. The format enabled marquee actors to be cast, raising the profile of television.

However, 'seasons' ran into a snag. Since they were not a routine telecast, seasons were bad at retaining viewership. The viewership peaked at the first episode and was in secular decline for the remainder of the season, with a slight bump for the final episode. Producers wanted to have the audience of the first episode for their entire season (Read this line

as Producers wished to have the advertising dollars for the first episode for the whole season.) And so came the concept of dumping all episodes on day one itself. Obviously, this can be done on the web and not on television. Thus a web series meant all episodes of a season on day one.

I find it challenging to keep track of series from one year to the next. And if you are like me, you are put off by these multi-season series. For example, I have not seen 'Game of Thrones.' Instead of waiting a year for the next season, I thought, why not let the series complete before watching it all at once. However, after the final season aired, the frustrated cum angry look on its regular viewers was enough for me to skip the series.

To catch viewers like me, who are not interested in multi-season series, show producers have introduced a new format. A single-season series with a fixed number of episodes — 'a limited series.'

The long-winded introduction so

far has not touched the series JL50 yet. Have some patience as I ask you, what is the difference between a 'limited series' and the thirteen-episode 'serials' that we began with?

As they say '*Duniya gol hai*,' we have traveled in time to reach the same place that we began with, albeit with a minor difference.

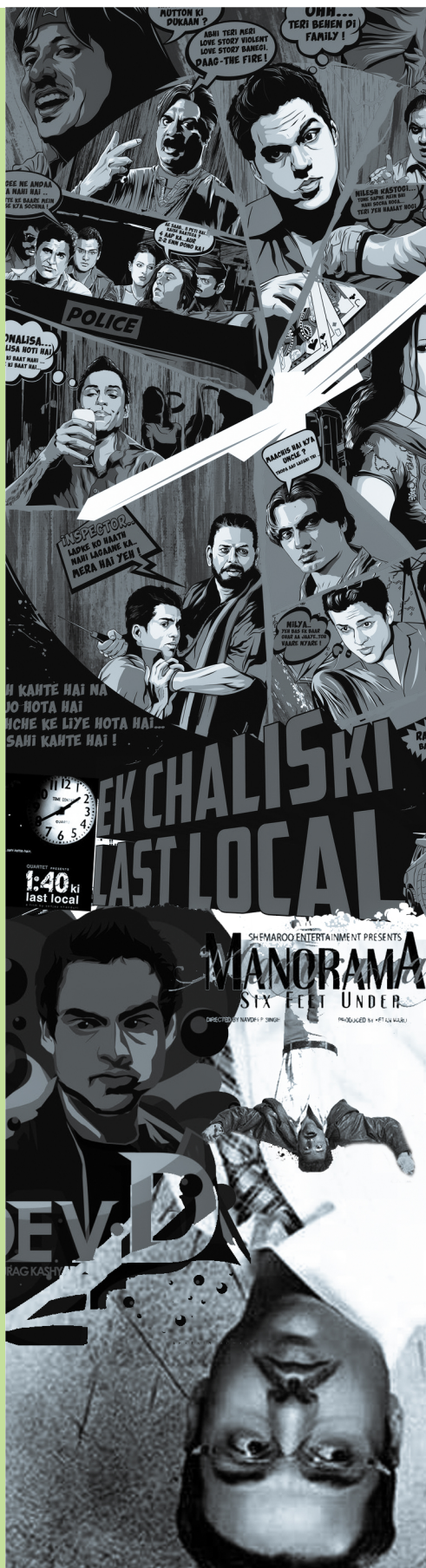
In JL50, we do the same thing, a plane takes off in the mid-eighties, travels in time, and lands after thirty-five years. But it reaches the same place we began with, albeit with a minor difference.

JL50 is an Indian sci-fi drama based on science. No rishi-munis enable the appearing or disappearing act, nor does a gin help with the time-travel bit. If they are not flying over the Bermuda triangle, the only way airplanes can experience time dilation is when they travel through wormholes.

Talking of Planes and time-travel, two series immediately spring to mind, one is the series 'Lost' and the other is the recent Netflix series 'Missing.' 'Lost' got lost in the multiple seasons and even multiple timelines it inhabited. Ultimately it had to approach a church to unite all the characters and send them to the afterlife. The series 'Missing' is also trying to apply Biblical theories to their limbo. However, JL50 stays away from religious connotations and is rooted firmly in Physics.

Time travel is brought about by a Scientist (Biswajit) who calculates the precise location of a wormhole. He uses ideological skullduggery to enlist an ultra-leftist group to hijack a plane (JL50) to fly into the said wormhole. But, remember it was the eighties, and maybe the Biswajit used a log-table instead of a calculator. Instead of his predicted time dilation of a few hours, Biswajit and the plane jump by thirty-five years.

To avoid dealing with the multiple character graphs of the passengers, JL50 crashes killing all of them.



Only two central characters survive, Biswajit and the lady pilot Bihu Ghosh. In comes Abhay Deol as CBI officer Shantanu to investigate JL50.

If Abhay Deol is starring in a project nine out of ten times, I end up watching it. This fellow has a knack for doing odd things and has carved a genre of his own. Right from 'Manorma Six Feet Under,' his choices are always interesting, especially when he is the sole established actor. If he is an ensemble or paired opposite someone famous, then chances are —ehh.

For example, this series deals with quantum physics, time-travel paradoxes, alternate realities, all these heavy topics in just four episodes. Just like a tennis pro who selects the ball with the least fluff, the series delivers a pure serve. And, it should be applauded for it. It manages this feat because the series focuses only on its central characters, Biswajit, Bihu, and Shantanu. The story is about these three people and 'what ifs' over a period of thirty-five years. Simple, tight, and an easy watch, JL50 reminded me about the Panchatantra stories. Does this story have a moral? **Maybe, the moral is, more such 'limited-series, please.**

And why not! A series like 'Dark' gets 'LOST' in multiple timelines, parallel universes. You need to visit forums to understand time-trees, chicken-egg conundrums. It sucks out the fun from the story and you are treating it more like a course in physics, wherein the underlying 'physics' itself is faulty. A limited series like JL50 can be enjoyed as pure drama with a 'limited' dose of sci-fi.

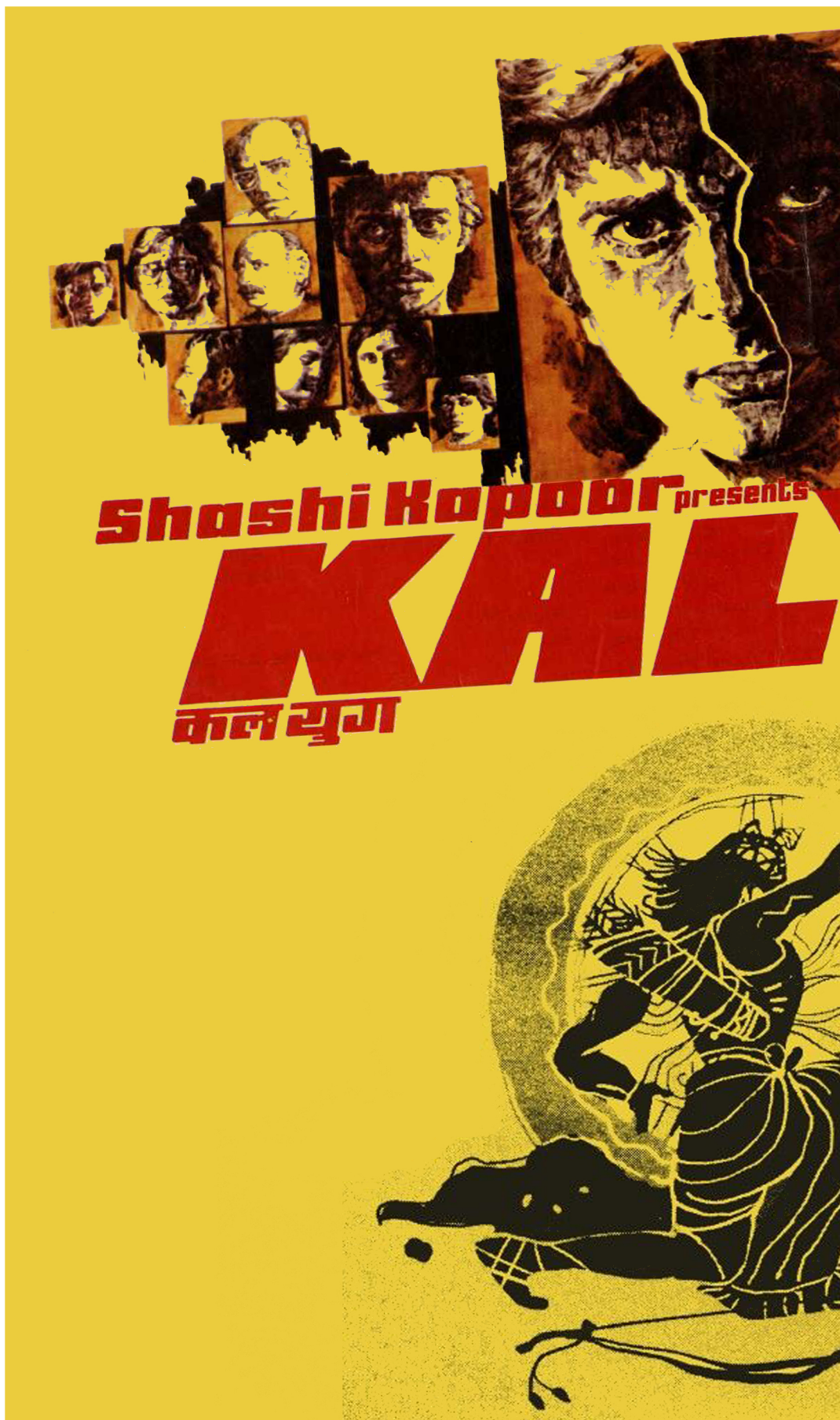


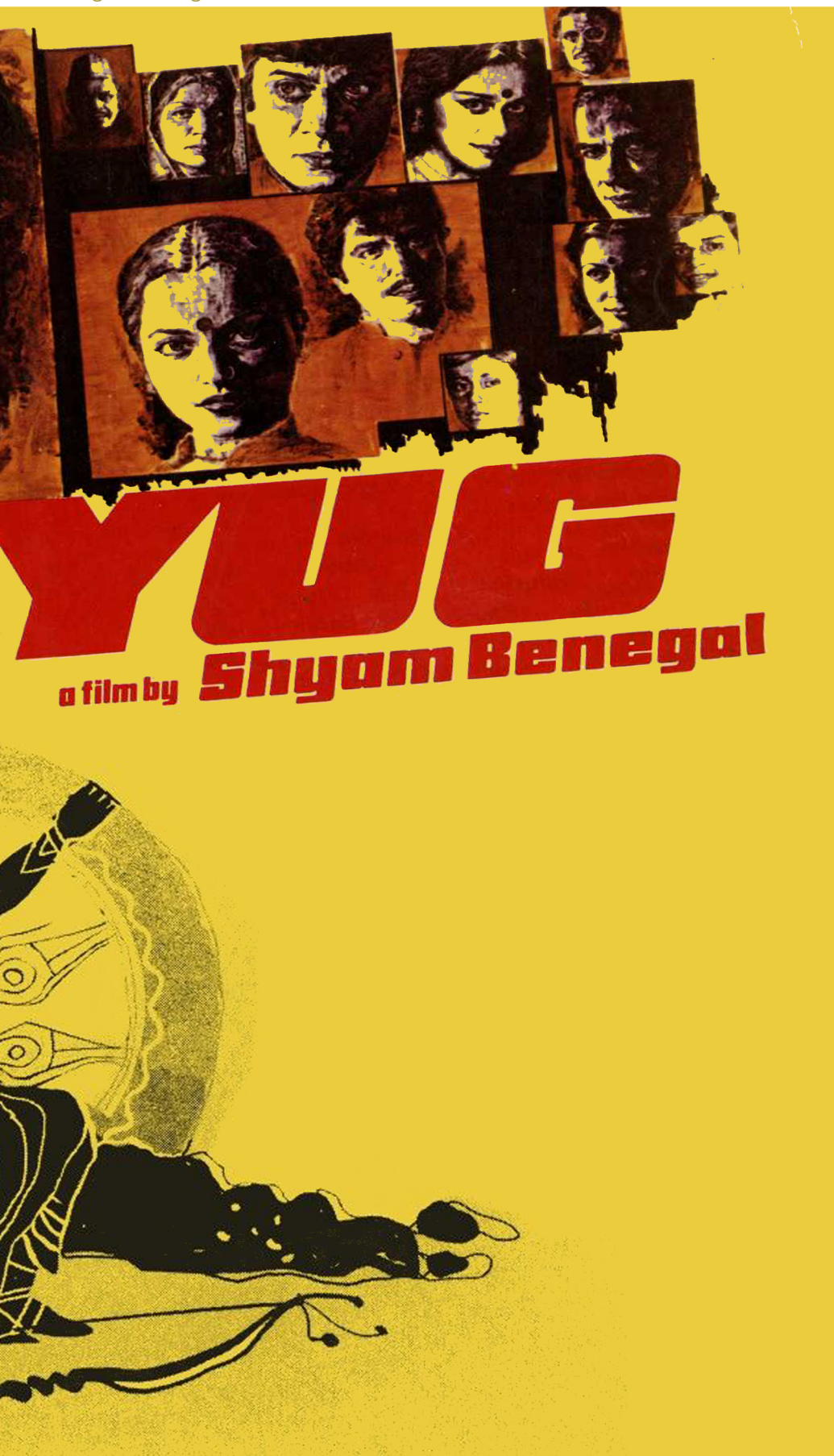
Vyasa's epic tale becomes more menacing as it moves from Dvapara Yuga to Kali Yuga. Honor has left the stage; warriors don't face each other by the rules of war; instead, they scheme via proxies and assassins. At one level, you might think that this is a simple re-telling of the tale in a modern context. However, the writer Girish Karnad is leading a two-pronged attack. He is critiquing the ancient myth by showcasing its absurdities using today's situations. And, at the same time, he is hitting hard at today's elites and the dryness of the industrial world, using the Mahabharata.

One caveat before we proceed to dive into Kalyug. The movie presumes your familiarity with the characters, themes, and critical events of the Mahabharata. It does not waste time in setting up the stage. A simple family tree shown at the start of the movie sets the ball rolling. The film is one event after another, like a spray from a machine gun. So, if you have no background on the epic, the movie will feel like a set of disjointed scenes without transition.

Once you accept the theme, the movie becomes an exercise in drawing parallels and deviations from the epic. The film does away with certain characters (Nakul, Sahdev, Drona, the ninety-eight Kauravas) and focuses on the conflict between families. Dharamraj, Balraj, Bharatraj (Arjuna) on one side, Dhanraj (Duryodhana), Sandeepraj with Karan Singh on the other side. The Pitamah of the two families, Bhisham Chand and Savitri (Kunti), hold on to family secrets and shames.

Tracking the deviations, we can't help but notice the tectonic shift in Krishna. Kishan Chand of today is not eloquent on virtues and is not interested in delivering a treatise on Dharma. Instead, he is motivated by 'self.' He chooses the Pandavas because his sister Supriya (Draupadi) is married to Dharamraj. He cements this partnership further by marrying his Daughter (Subhadra) to Bharatraj. Yes, Kishan Chand matches his sister and his daughter to brothers of the





same household. If we were to miss this absurdity, we are reminded about it in a terse tone by Draupadi.

Shyam Benegal and Girish Karnad use Draupadi to showcase the entitlement felt by today's elites. Supriya nonchalantly mentions that Karan Singh wanted to marry her. She states this not because she has a soft corner for Karan. But to use it as an assertion of her superiority over the orphan. When income tax officers raid their homes and go through her personal belongings, she views this as an insult. She is not interested in the right or wrong of the raid. Her anger is fueled by the emotion of "How can they do this to us?". How can a lowly tax officer even think of interfering in her life? After all, it is the privilege of those like her to control those below them. This is her Vastraharan.

Who is right or wrong in the tale? In the narration of the ancient legend, the Pandavas are on the side of Dharma. We take our presumptions into the movie, only to find them being dismantled piece by piece. The Pandavas are scheming. They use trickery to get hold of the industrial secrets of Kauravas. Their actions are clearly destroying the existence and legitimacy of the Kaurav enterprise. We see the Kauravas merely responding to the backstabbing by conjuring up a strike in the Pandava camp. The creators intentionally break the facade of Dharma on the side of Pandavas.

In the age of Kaliyuga, there is no Dharma; there are just winners and losers

Soon enough, we realize that the writer is playing with our knowledge of the Mahabharata. As he deviates from the themes of the Mahabharata, he carefully maintains parallelism with the events of the Mahabharata. The wrongful death of Abhimanyu (Balraj's son) remains a cowardly murder by Dhanraj. Karan's murder occurs while he is fixing the punctured tire of his car. A lofty parallel is contrasting the depth of the movie.

In general, the similarities stay at the surface, reminding us that this is the war of Kurushetra. At the same time, at the depths, we traverse the darkness of human relationships. The two families with knives at each other's throats mingle effortlessly at weddings and social events—the absurdity of the Indian joint family culture.

Another human relationship: Marriage is dealt with a subtle underhand of all times. We see 'noise' in relationships. A calm, generally restrained Dharamraj is married to the volatile and ambitious Supriya. Supriya has a special connection with Bharatraj; both are ambitious, intelligent, and possess ruthless energy. Yet, Supriya has to watch Bharatraj getting married to her own niece, Subhadra. Subhadra is naive, enjoys the fine things of life; music is her comfort. In a similar vein, the orphan Karan is ironically the most cultured of the lost. He has a passion for sports, western classical music, enjoys his moments of comfort. Subhadra admires Karan but never thinks of him as a husband because she has been conditioned to be the cog that shall cement an alliance. In one scene, Subhadra, Bharatraj, and Karan meet in a hotel. Bharataj is raging with vile thoughts towards Karan. However, Karan approaches the couple, greets them, compliments the lady, and politely takes leave. Yet, everyone in the family treats Karan Singh as inferior to them. They disrespect him by refusing to shake hands and use the most grudging of tones while talking to him.

In one sense, Mahabharata is the tragedy of innocents like Karan, Subhadra, and Abhimanyu. Guided by social conditioning and a false sense of loyalty, they meet their doom. For Karan, the path is the most torturous. One of the best scenes in Indian cinema is when Kunti reveals the truth of his birth of Karan Singh. A scene where a superfluous writer like me would be tempted to spend lines and lines traversing the tricky terrain, the Genius of Girish Karnad embraces brevity. The actual truth is never uttered ; it is only hinted at. Shashi



Shashi Kapoor as Karan Singh gives his most memorable piece of acting by the expressions of his face and the combination of shock and pain in his eyes. The genius is that this iconic scene is shorter than the time it will take for you to read this paragraph.

Karan Singh's death destroys any possibility of Dharma in the film. Bharatraj reacts violently and becomes distraught on hearing that the person he murdered was his own brother. However, we realize that his pain is not emerging from the 'Sin' of murdering his brother. He is in pain because of the 'Sin' of his mother having an illegitimate child. He is shattered by his 'image' getting wrecked; his ego is damaged. All the while, he is ignorant that all children, including Karan Singh, were a result of the sexual exploitation of Savitri.

The film is violent without showing any bloodshed.

It is designed to make you feel uncomfortable; the secrets that a cultured society keeps horrify us. In the final scene, we see Bharatraj comforted by Supriya as she holds his head on her lap. She asks Subhadra to leave the room, closing the doors on her way out. Shyam Benegal leaves us with an uneasiness about the situation. Saying many things without uttering them.

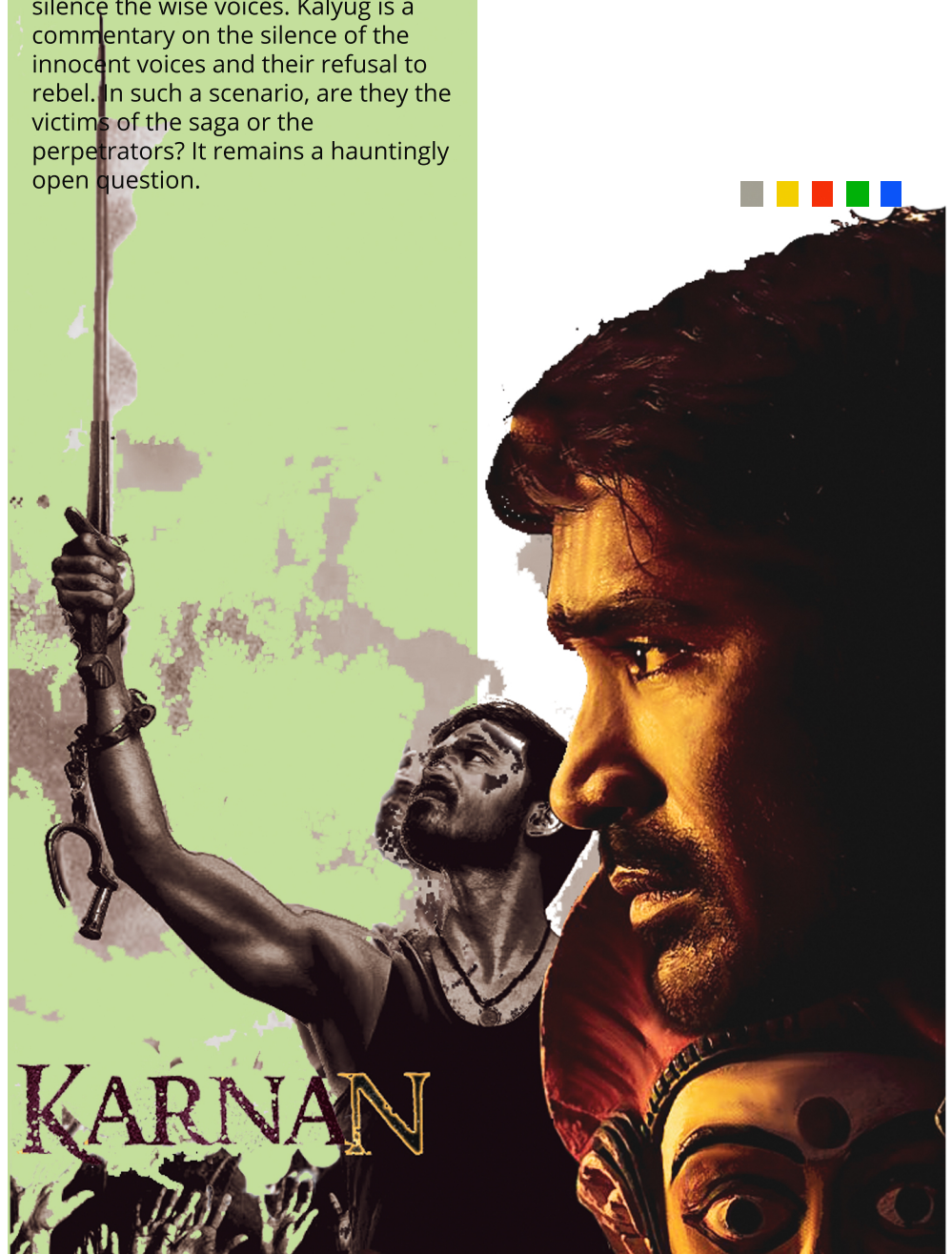
On a personal note, this one dialogue in the movie relayed my literal first thoughts from when I first read the Mahabharata. Karan Singh confronts Bhesham Chand to explain all the injustices done to him by keeping him an orphan. The Pitamah counters him and says everyone is bothered by the injustices done to them; what about the others. A worker was killed in a strike action organized by Dhanraj and Karan Singh at the Pandava factory. Bhesham Chand asks, ***what about the injustice done to him?***

In my reading and subsequent viewing of the Mahabharata, this question bothered me. All the central characters in the epic fight and kill each other. Arjuna famously kills Karna, Bhim avenges insult by killing Duryodhana, and we have many more examples. One question always bothered me, 'Why did so many soldiers have to die in the Kurushetra?' Couldn't the key characters of the epic just fight each other man to man? Never during the war did an ordinary frontline soldier kill anyone significant. So why were they part of this war? Everyone was bothered about their kin; the Pandavas mourned Abhimanyu, Kandhari mourned her children, but what about all the collateral damage?

Recently (circa 2021), the Tamil movie 'Karnan' has blown the context of the Mahabharata to a complete one-eighty degree. As the name suggests, it is from the point of view of Karna. There have been many books written from Karna's perspective, Mrutyunjay the most famous of the lot. However, they hit a sympathetic note; they make you cry for Karna. Karnan shows what happens when Karna refuses to accept his fate and decides to fight for his own. Karna of Karnan is equal in sacrifice, but he is not willing to sacrifice for the sake of Dharma or out of a sense of loyalty to Duryodhana. Karnan is willing to sacrifice for his own lot. In Mahabharata, Karna sought to be accommodated in the rules of the society. In Mahabharata, Karna's violence is internal; in Karnan, he brings out the violence and challenges society. Society stumbles, fumbles, all appearance of propriety is lost, and its dark side is exposed. Karnan shames society for its violence. A reminder of how fragile our social contract is. Karnan's refusal to be a part of the collateral damage comes at a high personal cost. Can he spend the rest of his life happily, or are heroes meant to be happy?

Kalyug, on the other hand, is fatalistic. Whether it is Karna or Dhanraj or even the ever-pained Dharamraj, their fates are sealed. Whether it is Dvapara Yuga or Kali Yuga, destinies cannot be changed. Karnan may eventually choose to be happy, but Karan Singh is void of will. Dharamraj and the Pitamah understand the eventual doom in the conflicting paths of Bharatraj and Dhanraj. But they are helpless to stop them. The unruly men conjure up arguments of fairness and justice to silence the wise voices. Kalyug is a commentary on the silence of the innocent voices and their refusal to rebel. In such a scenario, are they the victims of the saga or the perpetrators? It remains a hauntingly open question.

This is what Shyam Benegal and Girish Karnad do to us, the audience. Many authors have tried to redraft perspectives of our mythology by changing its theme explicitly. Isn't Sita's Ramayana an oxymoron in itself? It better be called Sitayana then! However, the makers of Kalyug manage to redraft a perspective despite following the myth. Thus Kalyug is one of those movies wherein 'genius' turns out to be a relatively weak word to describe what it achieves.





I don't know how many of you were dragged to your cousins' marriages. As a child, those were the things I hated the most. To attend a wedding where you don't know anyone, and just need to be present since it's a must. I still don't get it; why should a child attend a marriage where he does not know the bridegroom or bride. Sitting on those rickety chairs with a portion of food or something is given to you to shut up should not count as a marriage experience, but again who am I to complain. Marriage is executed so that its goal is to ignore the bride and groom and instead work towards caressing the egos of some obscure Bua, Mama, or Mami.

Sitting through such 20-30 odd marriages where I never met the bride or groom, yet had my belly filled did have an impact on me; it made me question what the Bleep is this marriage shit? Why is this the focal point of one's life, where I would be

to despite my board exams? When people who attend it are more interested in queueing for the food, rather than the rituals, where people thought, it was Mela, meet each other. Especially those wrinkled grannies who would ask you the million-dollar question, "remember me? I had changed your diapers when you were 3 months old, or you cried for blah blah when you were 1 year old" Now I am not Abhimanyu to remember people from mothers womb. Expecting one to remember his first two years is just ..anyway. To these grannies, rather than answering, I used to ask, "why are people married?"

Like you would have guessed, the answer was "once you grow up, you will know," some answered, "that's the tradition," or some would outright call me rude. None cared to really explain the WHY, actually. This question has remained unanswered for a very long time.

Still, another question was hidden at its root "what is marriage?"

Every religion rather culture has this concept of marriage in some form or other. The basic premise is marking one person for another for, say, eternity. This marking can be done in many forms, exchanging rings, vows, accepting some repetition of words, or even some other form. Even in India, marriage varies a lot from north to south or west to east. One common thing is fire and the 7 Pheras. This is the exchange of vows with fire as witness. Fire or Agni has been the most important God for a very long time. His duty is to carry our offerings to God and so on. Rigveda begins with praying to him; almost every ritual related to human life is done, performed with his presence. In the simplest form, the daily diya lighting is nothing but inviting his presence. For the prayers to reach the almighty, the presence of Agni is essential.

This fits well as why Agni is used to during the 7 Phera, as the couple is registering their wishes/vows with God via Agni. Now that I had understood where the registration was being done, the question of marriage still alluded to me.

Hinduism has these eight types of marriages. These marriages are not available as a list of options to pick from but rather categorization after the event.

The eight marriages are as follows

1. Bramha Marriage: The bridegroom family officially asks the bride's family for marriage. Once all agree, marriage is conducted with kanyadan.

2. Daiva Marriage: The bride is offered as some Dakshina for any services rendered. It's a marriage where the bride's father looks for the bridegroom. It is different from the Brahma marriage as women are treated as an object.

3. Arasha Marriage: When the bride is married off to some Sage or Rishi. Here the bride's father gives nothing to the bridegroom but might actually beget something like a cow or so.

4. Prajaptya Marriage: This is similar to Brahma marriage. There are no expensive rituals, just garlands are exchanged in the presence of the families with their consent. It's the money saver package

5. Gandharva Marriage: This is quite a simple form, where the bride and groom just accept each other, exchange garlands. This usually happens in the absence of parents or somewhat against their wishes/consent. No formal rituals, no approvals from parents are conducted.

6. Asura Marriage: This marriage is where the bride's father gives away his child in exchange for large sums of money, wealth, or some material gain, wherein the bride's consent does not exist. Here the bride's father may or may not be under duress.

7. Rakshasa Marriage: This is forceful marriage when brute force is used to get married. This can be abducting, killing family, etc., to get married.

8. Paischacha Marriage: This is the most atrocious form, where the bride before marriage would be raped, intoxicated, mentally disoriented. To seek revenge or establish authority, such a marriage would occur.

So a broad framework definition of marriage is clear. To put it even in simpler terms, marriage is a simple declaration towards the society at large on behalf of bride and groom that these two individuals are henceforth allowed to have sex, which would be considered fealty.

Why do I boil the whole marriage to just an act of sex? Well, that is the basis for procreation, and here again, it comes in our Agni. Agni, which was the mere fire of the Homa, can also be the burning desire to procreate. Rather this fire is essential for the consummation of the marriage.

Our ancestors knew it very well and knew how to disguise it all to sanctify it with some rituals and called it the Vivah. But this has not been the case always. The marriage did not exist in any form, nor the 8 categories existed. In my burning desire for knowledge, I reached how it all began.

Now let me warn you, we are to tread into the Upanishads realm, an effortless yet complex source of knowledge. As much as it answers, it asks more. Upanishads are like the knowledge that one needs to learn but cannot be taught.

In Chandhyog Upanishad is this story of a marriage. Shvetaketu, around the 10-year-old son of sage Uddalaka, performs their morning ablutions assisted by his mother. As his mother is providing water to Sage Uddalaka, another brahmin approaches her with a desire for sex. She readily agrees to it and goes with him. This angers Shvetaketu; he questions his father about how he can allow such a thing. To which his father answered, "Boy, that's the rule since antiquity, I do not own her; she

is free to decide what she wants."

This was disagreeable to Shvetaketu; he said this shouldn't be the case; a woman cannot just walk away. Later Shvetaketu became a great ascetic and established fidelity in cohabitation. He defined that woman belonged to the husband; rather, she must only belong to the husband. The standard notion of pativrata came into existence. Thus, he designed the framework for marriage and decided what is moral and immoral within that framework.

Let's go bit' Freud' on Shvetaketu. While growing in the ashram of seer Uddhalaka, he had another companion named Ashtavakra. This Ashtavakra grew up to become one of the greatest sages. His works like Ashtavakra Gita and Ashtavakra Samhita explore topics like the nature of metaphysical existence and the meaning of individual freedom.

His own story is fascinating: (it has a Bollywood Ring to it). Of the slightly varying accounts of his birth, the accepted outline is that, Ashtavakra's father Kahoda was Uddhalaka's disciple who later married his daughter Sujata. Kahoda was once reciting Vedas with his pregnant wife sitting next to him. Kahoda made a mistake, and the fetus from the womb corrected him. This happened eight times, enough to anger Kahoda. Feeling insulted by an unborn child, he cursed the child to be born with 8 deformities for his impudence shown towards his father. The baby born bore 8 bends/deformities and hence the name Ashtavakra.

Later Kahoda traveled to a court of a nearby kingdom for the debating vedic science and lost to his opponent Vandin. Vandin, before starting of debate, put the condition that the one who loses to him shall immerse himself in water.

All this was kept hidden from Ashtavakra, who grew up thinking Uddhalaka is his father. For years, Ashtavakra and Shvetaketu were buddies, similarly aged, growing up in

the same household. Once as Udhakala was playing with these two and Ashtavakra sat in his lap. Shvetaketu felt a sense of betrayal. He pulled him down and told Asthavakra that Udhakala is not his father. This act of Shevtaketu shocked Udhakala. To add salt to the wound, Shevtaketu told Ashtavakra that his father died after being defeated in Shashtrarth.

Shocked and angry, Ashtavakra left with a *Kasam* to avenge his father's death.

Left behind was a disturbed Udhakala angry with Shevtaketu. He had both these children growing up as equals, but one had harmed the other. For Shevtaketu to realize what his actions have done, Udhakala tells him that neither Shevtaketu is his own son: Shevtaketu was the son of his disciple. Ashtavakra and Shvetaketu were brothers not by birth but were brothers based on the love they shared for their father.

Flashback: Shvetaketu remembered the scene from his childhood where his mother walked away with some stranger. There was no 'Right to own' women; this revelation blew his mind off. To him, it was a blow to his identity. First of many blows. (will Freud call it lousy parenting? or bad mother?)

Cut to: Shevtaketu became a scholar trained under Udhakala, which added to his pride and made him the "know it all" person. Sensing that pride, Udhakala asked him what cannot be taught, cannot be seen, heard, or understood? Shevtaketu said "No, he does not know any such thing." This pushed Shevtaketu to begin his next round of studies.

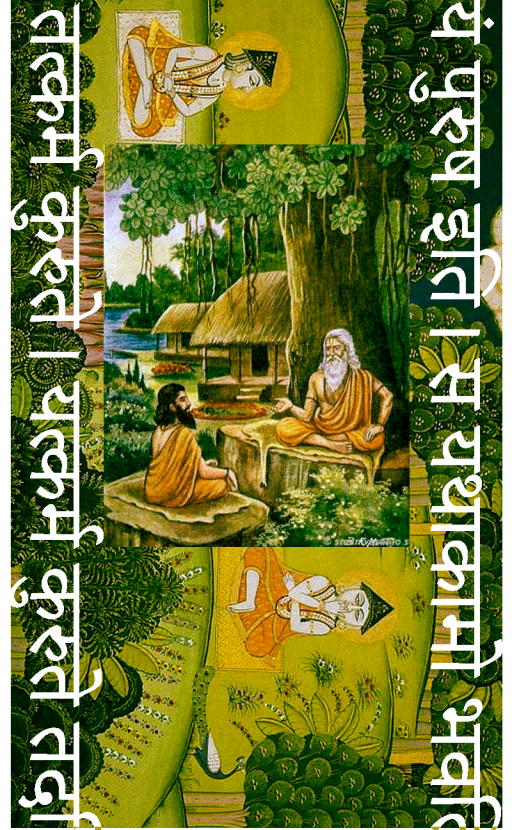
Cut to: Shevtaketu, now came armed with the knowledge about what cannot be taught. This pleased his father. He then went to King Pravahana's court in Panchala. The humble king asked him a few questions, to keep the story short, related to what happens after death. Despite knowing what cannot be taught, Shevtaketu was unable to answer and took another blow to his Self-Pride and returned to his father. Udhakala said he doesn't know it. With the ever-learning spirit, Udhakala advised him to reach out to King Pravahana and seek that knowledge. Shevtaketu avoided it because of his ego.

Cut to: few years down the line (after the Mahabharata war ended), the unified kingdoms were engaged in appointments of priests. One such Rishi Agneva was appointed as head/chief priest to Kosala, Kashi, and Videha. Shevtaketu felt that this should have been his position, given his family stature, high birth, and entitlement. He asked Udhakala to use his connections to get that position, which Udhakala absolutely refused. This led Shevtaketu to hold anger against meritocracy, causing more trouble. Later he began objecting to the drinking and what he called adultery in the Brahmins. Which in turn motivated him to make a framework for what marriage should be. What should define adultery, and what shall be sanctimonious within marriage. Shevtaketu pushed to ban polygamy and prescribed adherence to monogamy.

These and other such acts, where he took extreme positions, led him to be expelled from Udhakala's ashram. He was maverick, bent on changing all that he did not like. But like they say, *'Shaadi karaado sab theek ho jayega'*. Shevtaketu reunited with his childhood friend Suvarchala and got married.

This caused a tremendous shift in his nature from maverick to a mellow householder. . He became a great Acharya well respected for his knowledge and wisdom.

यत्कर्म भवति तत्कर्म कुरुते । यत्कर्म कुरुते तद्भिः संपद्यते ॥



काममय एवायं पुरुष इति । स यथाकामो भवति तत्कर्म भवति ।

As your will is, so is your deed As your deed is, so is your destiny

You are what your deep, driving desire is As your desire is, so is your will

Shevkaketu laid down protocols for various yagnya, even allowed sweets for the priests, which were earlier forbidden. Later on in his life, he worked on a very famous book, almost eponymous to Indian identity in the rest of the world. This book remains unchallenged regarding its ownership by the rest of the world. Rather such a profound work of research has no parallels. This book's journey begins with a Seer Nandi who wrote it first. Shvetaketu tediously condensed to a book with only 500 chapters named Kamashastra. With successive revisions from Babhravya, Suvarnabha, Gonardiya, and other scholars, Vatsyanana composed Kamasutra with additions from 'Vaisika' and 'Samprayogika.

' A rebel who questioned, detested polygamy, and drinking. The same rebel his later life composed Kamshastra and allowed even his disciples to drink. He shows that learning is changing, clinging on to beliefs is stagnancy, and letting go is to grow.

What I wish to leave you all with is this; the changes Shvetaketu ushered in. Before him, society was functioning well (as per those days' morality); he came in and changed; what he saw was wrong. We today see many things that have come from him; Ek patnivrata and pativrata are just one aspect of him. This is where Upanishads become the complex. It's a simple story, but one that changes the lives of millions and millions since the millenniums. At the root, it is a simple change from one system to another without being judgmental.

If one reads the story of Shevtaketu and his tryst with destiny, one may see how change is only the constant thing for the growth of the Self.

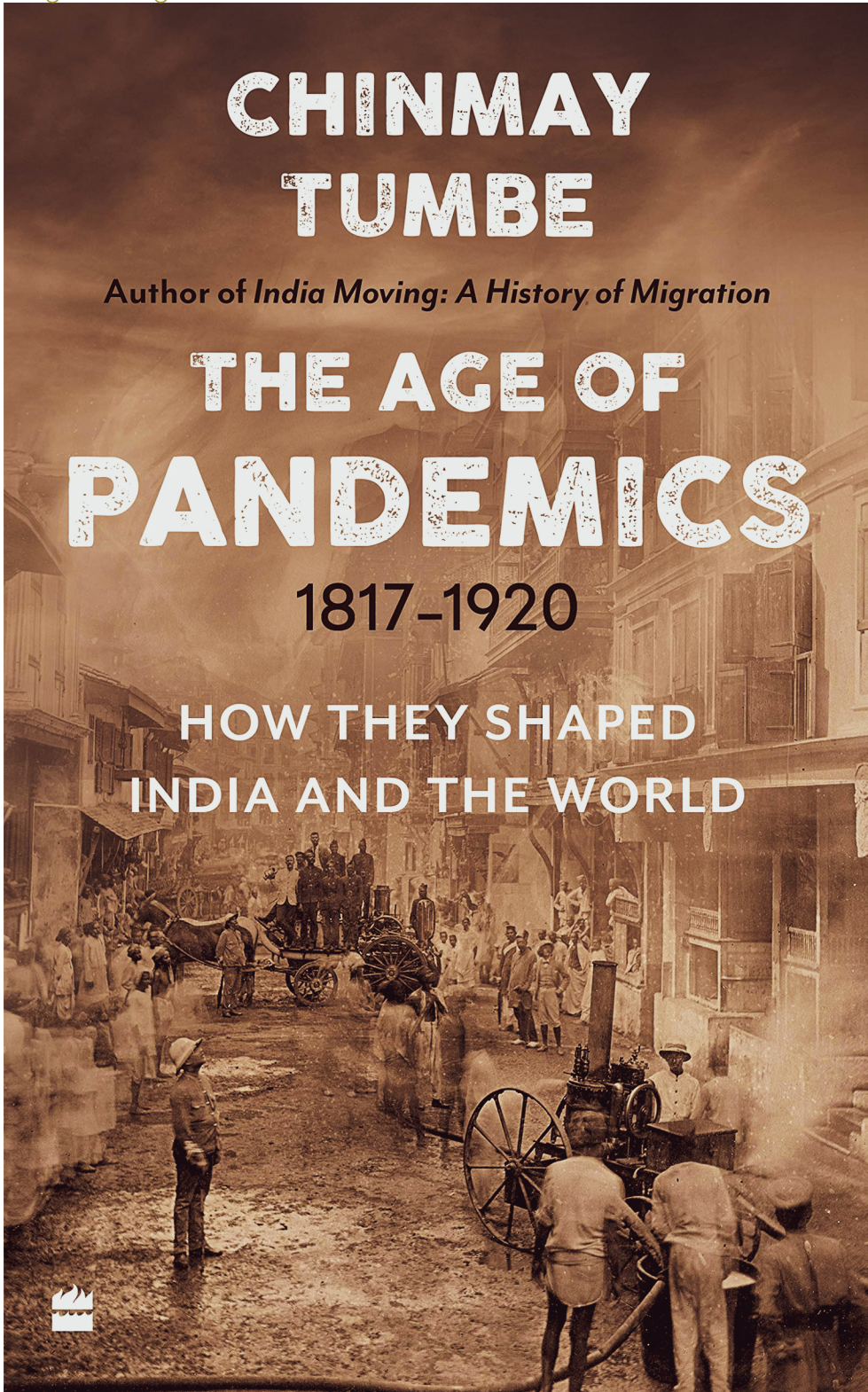


CHINMAY TUMBE

Author of *India Moving: A History of Migration*

THE AGE OF PANDEMICS 1817-1920

HOW THEY SHAPED INDIA AND THE WORLD



I was always a believer in the socio-economic theory that population growth declines with rising education and rising living standards. The crude version of this theory is that poor and illiterate people have more kids.

But facts around me belied this theory. Like many in my generation, I have roughly four to five uncles/aunts on either side of my family. In my generation, two kids are the norm. If we go back to one generation, my uncle and aunts also have four to five uncles/aunts. Consequently, we have grandparents whose count far exceeds the scope of the fingers on our hands and legs. But, if we move another generation back to that of my great-grandparents, the widening family tree suddenly shrinks to a couple of branches.

Puzzling, isn't it? How can the generation preceding the one's five kids prescribe to 'Hum doh, Humare doh.' Were they affluent and educated elites that failed to educate their children!

Thankfully, my great-grandfather lived into his nineties, missing the century mark by a whisker. His cognition stayed firm all through his years, though a bit hard of hearing, he always had a lot to say. I thus got the opportunity to chat with him about his life and times. I asked him, how come you are just two brothers? Maybe there were sisters with whom we have lost touch.

His answer was vague and yet poignant. He said he was '*probably*' their parents' fifth child, but the first to survive!

Here is a direct quote from the book that captures this very essence of those times

"children were not counted as permanent members of the family until they had encountered smallpox once and survived."



India began the twentieth century with a life expectancy of around just twenty for every Indian. Today, a hundred years later, India has raised it to about seventy. A free mind and scientific outlook have helped us increase life expectancy, and hopefully, we will continue this march.

This also puts into perspective the somewhat deceptive anecdotes of how some grand old man climbs a mountain at the age of ninety. Such accounts are usually touted to glorify the sturdiness of the previous generations and point how comparatively weak and lazy our generation is. In those times (like my great-grandfather), if you survived to the age of Thirty, it meant you had a solid genetic make-up. In 1900, around five out of ten children did not stay to celebrate their first birthday. The next hurdle was smallpox, and as the book points out, the age pandemics meant a Cholera or a Plague was always lurking around the corner. Both diseases had a fatality rate that peaked at fifty percent. You needed to be of a robust constitution to survive till your thirties. The Law of averages dictates that if the majority are not surviving a year, and the mean is twenty, some outliers will make it to a hundred. But that doesn't mean it was all hunky-dory for those who lived then.

This information casts new light on concepts like child marriages. Today these seem evil, but at life expectancy levels of twenty, they are a necessity.

In his book, Chinmay Tumbe brings out the facts and brings out the stories and tales of the pandemics. This is not a paper in a statistical journal; the book is a story with a wide arc compassing the narrative.

The focus is on three infectious diseases that laid havoc in India from 1817 to 1920. Cholera, Plague, and Influenza, three diseases with different trajectories yet competing in terms of the devastation they left in their trail.

The journey of Cholera is a journey in the development of infectious diseases. The various pulls, the prejudices, and the vested interests that play a part in our world.

The most important question is, what to do with a disease that you do not understand? If no treatment protocol is available, what does a person do? Obviously, they will explore all avenues. In Bengal, people thronged the temples of Ola Bibi, as she became the reigning deity for Cholera. In Bundelkhand, it was Hurdoul Lala.

With Cholera, roughly half the people made a recovery. However, not knowing why a person recovered creates problems of its own. Treatment based on anecdotes is outright dangerous. If a tobacco addict recovers from a disease, it might encourage everyone to chew on the dried leaves. In Cholera, an outright bizarre treatment was 'bloodletting.' Cutting a person's veins and allowing blood to flow; the more the blood flowed, the more the chances of recovery. One reviewer aptly called it 'benevolent homicide.'

You might say that 'traditional' or 'archaic' thinking was the problem, and 'modern' science was the solution. Science definitely is the path to solution; however, scientists are the hurdles in that path paradoxically. Scientists who latch on to dogma. The dogma many held on to was 'sanitarianism' — a soil-poison hypothesis that theorized that diseases were caused by poisonous 'miasma' rising from rotten organic matter. India suffered because British India's scientific advisor, Cunningham, was loyal to the German miasmatic Pettenkofer. For decades people like him either ignored or, worse, actively sabotaged alternative theories for the disease. The land where Robert Koch (Calcutta, 1884) successfully carried out experiments to prove the presence of 'bacillus' causing Cholera was ironically the land that was last to accept his work. One can only imagine the unnecessary deaths in the intervening period.



therapy (ORT) has brought down the fatality rate from Cholera to well below one percent. With the understanding of Cholera as primarily as water-borne transmission, outbreaks are effectively controlled. We have not seen even a mild epidemic of Cholera in the last hundred years.

The story of the Plague is the same. It also followed the seven stages of a Pandemic. A deadly disease, poor understanding, chaotic administration, misplaced treatments, superstition, science-denial, and final acceptance of the truth. The difference was Cholera tormented India for over nine decades; the story of the Plague unfolded over three decades.

However, Plague has two aspects that are relevant in today's world.

Anti-Vaxers haven't changed. After Variolation and Vaccination, we discovered to be effective against Small Pox, Scientists came up with similar techniques to combat Plague. Though mildly effective, these proved to be an effective barrier against Plague. But, rumor-mongering, as usual, played spoilsport in large-scale inoculations. The Anti-Vaxer tactics haven't changed since then. They target the primal fear of humans: Using words like 'impotence' and 'infertility.' Effective even during today's times to keep people away from Vaccinations. Nothing's changed.

The Second legacy of the Plague in India is the 'Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897,' which was invoked again in 2020 for Covid-19. The act is as draconian as an act can be.

It mandated forced quarantines, medical officers were allowed to enter any household for testing its occupants for the disease. Authorities burned down the house of a confirmed Plague case to control the spread of the disease. People were forcefully evacuated and quarantined, lockdowns were imposed.

The events of the last decade of the nineteenth century are a perfect case study of why lockdowns do not work. They did not work then, and they did not work now. The question of livelihoods always drives humans to venture out, no matter what the risk. If you try to scare them, the fear works against any lockdown as the natural instinct is the flight to safety. Plague lockdowns caused mass migrations within India, helping the disease to spread instead of controlling it.

Pune is probably the place that should remind us why harsh measures cannot work. The strict checking and quarantines created immense resentment. Things came to a boil as the Chapekar brothers shot Commissioner Rand in 1897.



We must never forget that Walter Charles Rand held the title of **'The Plague Commissioner.'**

Soon the colonial government realized that harsh prescriptive measures will not work. The Epidemic Act though active was never implemented to its full force again. The focus was shifted to awareness programs, co-opting local leaders, integrating preventive work with cultural activities, and garnering the people's trust.

Reading the chapters on Cholera and Plague, I kept feeling whether I was reading on History or Current Affairs events. With Influenza, the third Pandemic covered in the book, the same pattern was followed, albeit over a period of a year and a half. 'History repeats itself,' a hard reality of life. Do we learn from History? Or, as the philosopher George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

The Plague is now a footnote in Renaissance literature. Cholera is a backdrop in Gabriel García Márquez's love story. Influenza is lost in the chronicles of the first world war. Perhaps they are not where they should be: in the annals of our History books and Medical education. Suppose a generation of people believe that Cholera means just gorging on ORT and some medicines

In that case, they are doomed to repeat the seven stages when a novel Pandemic arrives.

We need to learn from History, but again the Skeptic would say, are humans capable of learning from History. Here are few lines from Kautilya' Arthashastra. As you read these lines, ask yourself, have we even bothered to implement them —

No one shall throw dirt on the streets or let mud and water collect there. No one shall pass urine or feces near a holy place, a water reservoir, a temple, or a royal property.

No one shall throw dead bodies or animals or human beings inside the city. In case of danger from rats, locusts, birds, or insects, the appropriate animals, like cats and mongooses, shall be let loose, and these predators shall be protected from killing.

Poisoned grain may be strewn around, purificatory rites may be performed by experts. Or, the rat tax, a quota of dead rats to be brought in by each one, maybe fixed.

Isn't it sad that if all these measures were implemented, the transmission of Cholera and Plague would be largely controlled along with other communicable diseases.

Interestingly, even today, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation pays eighteen rupees for every dead rat brought to it.



Growing up in 90's has impacted my psyche, to love TV series with limited episodes/seasons as opposed to the daily soap. Be it Karamchand, Circus, Mr. Yogi, Byomkesh Bakshi, and so on. I know they had one episode per week, but that exactly has made its roots in my outlook towards the series.

I took to liking the Hollywood series, but lately they have started to trade less on story and invest more in prolonging the number of seasons. That's where Korean Drama helps me fill that void compared to plethora of pathetic TV soaps in India (webseries included). The US series have become way too predictable to watch. By predictable I mean lacking creativity. I do not wish to defend Kdramas, they are with flaws, some are outright riddled with flaws but they have their uniqueness.

Many Kdramas are picked from hit webtoons, which have their own culture and a realm blooming from the Manga/manhwas. Being webtoons, their creativity has not bound, ideas come from the most oddset of situations, very ordinary people write/draw webtoons, bringing a very fresh outlook to the mix. Apart from these regular writers also write amazing stories, astonishingly refreshing, especially when it comes to blending the traditional Korean culture, Hollywood influence, local myths and so on. Added to all this they have their period dramas, where the authors take scandalous freedom on their kings and queens and yet no Sena claims their noses or heads. Audiences are well prepared and educated enough to know separate reel and real history.

Like any other country Korea too loves serial killer dramas. I usually wait for the series to end and then binge watch it, but with this 'Beyond Evil' series I could not hold myself. With 16 episodes it weaves great characters which play along the thriller/police drama lines. The drama has this lingering gloom from the past. A gruesome serial killer in past, who is never caught, has left this small town totally scarred. Every soul

has the aftermath of those murders etched on. Into such a cloudy town we as audience enter to experience the gloom.

This series has quite a stellar star cast with lead shouldered by actor Shin Ha-kyun, who is troubled by his past, as he was held responsible for his sisters gruesome disappearance, when only finger tips laid out on their family porch are found. 20 years later, he is still trying to resolve the case living as town's crazy detective,



supported by his then friends, who all are under constant suspicion. All live a mundane life but each one has a scar from past and suspect each other yet somehow only trust each other. The why and how we learn as the series progress.

In this town enters a new character, played by the rising Korean star Yeo Jin-goo, though very young for his age, has already showcased some great acting in his early works. Jin-goo's character is a demoted

detective who as punishment is sent off to this village, by his father who is deemed to be the next Chief of national police. Jin-goo though being young in service has higher post to our lead Ha-kyun. Here we expect these characters to balance each other, but that's the fallacy, each has his own crazy scalle. Shin Ha Kyung who is known for his excellent acting, and paring him with Jin-goo makes it worth a watch.

The two actors despite their age difference show great chemistry. As the series progress you notice there is no good character you wanting to cheer, every one is flawed. By the time you are drawn in by the characters, there occurs another murder, a ditto copy of what happened 20 years ago. This renders chaos and we as audience see, layer after layer being painful peeled off.

Watching it may make one feel, the series is about catching the culprit, but that's not it. The first half of this series plays heavily on emotions and has strong thriller tones. We all get sucked into horror of string of new murders that are occurring, which are totally unrelated to past, but yet carry that strong aftermath mark.

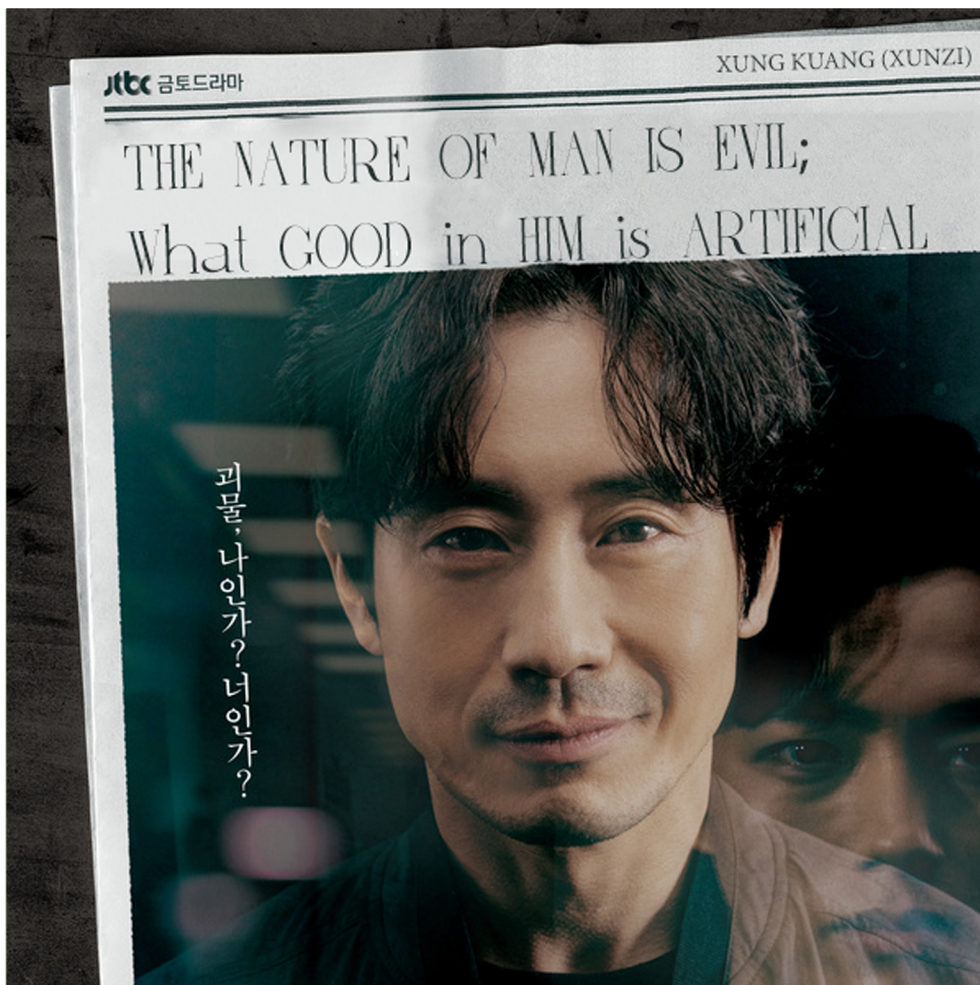
Being a simple story, the many twists layers make it enjoyable with no cliché trope, so much that midway series you have your serial killer caught, that's when you expect catharsis, but none is offered. Nada! And from here on the nuanced performances of all the actors especially the lead ones take the series to another level. **The second half of the series transitions into a police drama, where with each layer being peeled off, brings forth the question who exactly is evil?**

Your notions of evil are tested, your bias towards character and their actions does make you question how will you define evil. The rest half of series guides you to a satisfying end where all the threads brought to a logical end but yet you are left with the thought of what/who

who evil is. Here I must mention another character, a mother to of the other character, played wonderfully by Kil Hae Yeon. She plays this loving, protective mother and towns elected council member. She owns this character and every scene she makes you hate her through her performance. Nowhere she plays the evil, but just that loving mother, who can take any measure to protect her son, just makes your guts hate her. That performance by Kil Hae-yeon is worth watching.

The best part of the writer is how the lead character react with each other. Through the series Ha-kyun and Jin-goo are at odds with each other, they loathe each other, justify their reasons. As audience you keep betting they will get along soon, you start cheering for them to get along, like a spider you drawn into the web, you almost see that they are getting along, but that does not happen. This makes their relationship even more endearing. Another motif what I feel the writer subtly lays is the growing up. The new demoted young Jin-goo, who knows law by heart is way naive and green when it comes to people, while the veteran Ha-kyun is still lost in his past and forgotten to grow since then. Each character walks a very well defined path, struggles with this growth, resists its but then accepts it.

There is no romance, just simple story, brilliantly written and even so more executed in those 16 episodes, exceeding all expectations and goes beyond a tale of forgiveness and healing.



Today if you take stroll around Crescent, you will find, nicely paved road with premium quality tar. Some Zones have concrete roads, with well lifted footpaths and nice alleys.

On these exquisite roads, columns of new age Crescentians march to and fro. Dressed in shining yellow and white, with a brown 'samosa' tie, every breeze adds confidence in their stride.

Zoom out by 20 years, Crescent's location was outside the google map boundaries of Pune City. Tar was not yet invented, so contractors simply laid the road with grey rocks and pebbles. The first rains washed away the smaller pebbles, and pointed grey rocks conducted durability tests on your bicycle tires. Man preferred to be closer to nature, thus some roads were left in their natural pristine beauty. Brown Clay soil with no rocks or pebbles. A soil that converted to Jello during the rainy months.

With vast swathes of open land, wind had free reign. It routinely swept the dust into a vortex, a brown fog. This dust settled on the leaves. The pure raindrops dribbled from these leaves as brown water, blotting a modern art on your clothes, while passing through. To add and give dimension to this modern art, every passing vehicle splattered 'Chikkhal' (wet mud) as everyone made way through the myriad of mud ponds along the way.

So, my question is, WHY? Why did the powers that be, choose a White Uniform for our school? I mean, considering the situation, brown army fatigues were a more appropriate choice!

To top our woes, parents thought we were all Supermen from Krypton. When we took our browned clothes home, Parents sang in unison, "You make your clothes too dirty." They expected us to fly over those mud trees and mud ponds.

However, some days were worse off. On that day, as you rode rough avoiding the mud ponds, you would run into a nice fat block of mud. Mud that deceptively looked solid, waiting for the moment for your bicycle wheel to run into it. Suddenly it converted in to Jello, trapping the wheels. Newton's twin inventions of momentum and inertia, ensured that you flew off your bike, straight into the pond that you wanted to avoid. With the White converted into total brown, you reached home. Immediately, you crossed your index and middle fingers behind your back, and uttered, "Thank God, I was almost run over by a crazy dude driving a car "

WHY! Days Under the Crescent Sun





आई कुठे काय करते
Daily Soap = Series !

This is probably the cringe-most article I might have written because it is about a daily soap — that too, a Marathi daily soap.

Before you accuse me of anything, here is my anticipatory defense. Firstly, the series is the easiest to watch. By easy, I mean it is easy on my time. At the end of every episode, we are given a glimpse of the next day's episode. The thirty-second preview is literally the entire episode. Believe me, when I say literally, I mean literal literally! Besides the events in the preview, the rest of the episode is riff-raff, people walking from point A to point B, and mindless chatter. Twenty-three minutes of your life are saved by watching a thirty-second clip — enough to keep track of the story.

Secondly, if you watch it online, it is free to view (maybe, this should have been the first reason), and each episode comes with a one-line description of the episode. Now it is your choice whether to see the thirty-second clip or read a line.

With that, let's examine the artifact itself. It is basically the story of a housewife, mother of three, simpleton — Arundhati. For twenty-five years, she is feeding her children, tending to her in-laws, ensuring a smooth domestic life for her husband. Since she is a 'mere' housewife, nobody appreciates her. The work she does, cooking, cleaning, parenting, is considered menial. Her talents, like singing, are considered ordinary. Her knowledge is deemed to be useless in the real world because she earns no money from it. Hence, the title, आई कुठे काय करते; implies Mom doesn't do anything.

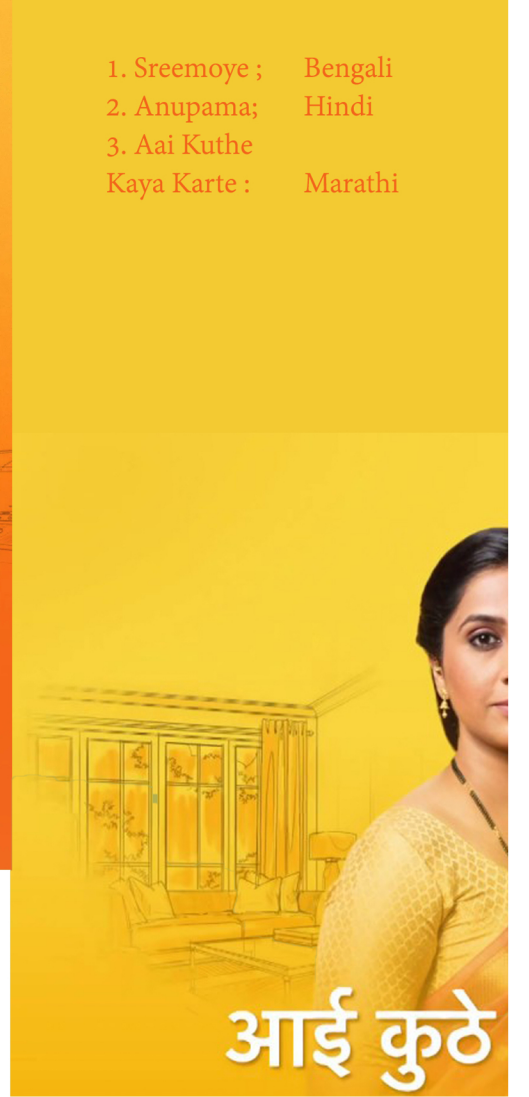


This idyllic existence of Arundhati is jolted when she comes to know (After 180 episodes) that her husband of twenty-five years is having an affair with an office colleague. Like a house of cards, the basis for her life collapses in a heap.

A solid premise with progressive undertones. Divorce in young couples is considered somewhat simple. In comparison, separation while having children in their twenties is challenging. Instead of reconciling and waiting for her husband to realise his folly, Arundhati decides to take the matter into her own hands. She moves for divorce. Not out of anger but out of a desire to search for a new identity. Her mother-in-law and elder son are traditionalists; they want the affair to be swept under the carpet. They feel Arundhati should forgive her husband and accept him back. At its core, it is a clash of values and attitudes.

The serial is a dose in feminism, progressivism, and liberal values. How often we have heard wives wronged by her husband's affairs

1. Sreemoye ; Bengali
2. Anupama; Hindi
3. Aai Kuthe Kaya Karte : Marathi



are advised to forgive and forget for 'the sake of her children.' Arundhati challenges this notion about the 'welfare of children.' She says if she stays quiet now, what example is she creating for her daughter — to accept abuse of trust in a relationship!

So far, so good. Interesting premise, at least something novel for the Marathi audience. But then, the show is also a case study in how the daily soap format can derail the best of intentions. The journey of Arundhati becomes the journey of all characters in the serial. Like picking a lottery sequence, trouble hits each character, the elder son, the daughter, the younger son, the grandfather, the grandmother, the mistress, the mistress's husband... You get the gist.

4. Kudumbavilakku; Malyalam
 5. Intinti
 Gruhalakshmi; Telugu

Not shown in images:

6. Inthi Nimma Asha; Kannada
 7. Baakiyalakshmi; Tamil

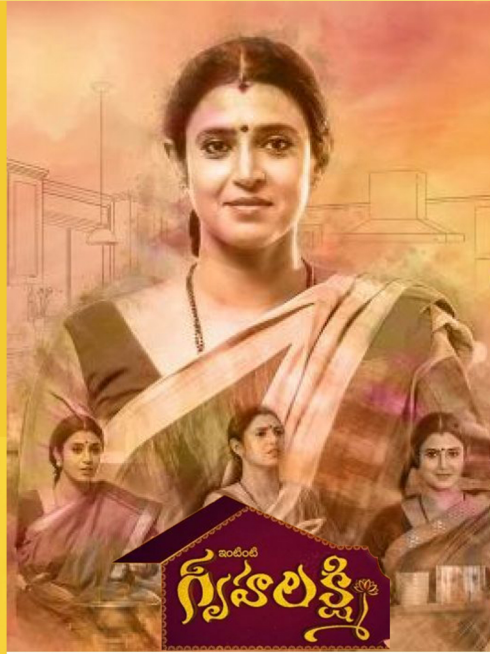


Instead of focusing on rebuilding her identity, Arundhati becomes solver-in-chief for the problems of others. Currently, the serial is inching towards the four hundred mark, and the divorce is yet to be finalized!

Now drifting around your story is one thing, but drifting away from your values is beyond puzzling. How can a progressive, liberal, modern story allow for superstition?

The lamp goes off, an accident happens. Oil from the lamp spills, another accident occurs, the number of lamps are not of the required quantity — you guessed it right; accident happens. So somebody get them a LED lamp.

And don't tell me this does not have an effect on the masses. During my school days, a popular Hindi 'Saas-Bahu' serial had an obsession



with prayer beads. Every time the Jaap-mala broke into multiple slow-motion replays of the beads scattering, it resulted in the passing away of some character. The association was so profound that my friend tried to buy immortality during the following Ramadan by getting a Misbaha woven with a steel wire instead of threads.

We can have progressivism but only this much progressivism, with allowances for irrationality.

On an interesting note, the serial contributes to creating a Geographical Information System (GIS) map of Indian progressivism. Arundhati's story is not original. Yes, it is a story of millions of wives across India; however, more importantly, it is a story adapted from a Bengali soap (Sreemoyee.) From Marathi, the serial has moved to the national shores of Hindi (apologies to my south Indian friends) in the form of Anupamaa (do emphasize on the 'maa.') By being the market leader, Bengali Arundhati is already divorced career-woman and also has a possible love interest in her life. Marathi Arundhati is probably still pondering whether her culture can allow for the introduction of a love interest. In general, she is a pondering 'being,' She is nearing the four hundred



episode mark, but she is yet to get a divorce. Mallu Arundhati is not a slow person; before hitting the triple century mark, she is already divorced, has a new career and is exploring a love interest. In the Venn Diagram of things, Telugu Arundhati has crossed the three hundred mark, is yet to finalise the divorce, and has a love interest from her past in the mix of things. Tamil Arundhati was last to the party; others have a six-month head-start over her. So she is still embattling the nitty-gritty of divorce. Despite being equally late, Hindi Arundhati is done with the divorce and introduced a love interest. However, it has turned out that the love interest was a trope to evoke jealousy in Arundhati's husband and create FOMO (a Fear Of Missing Out.) Devanagiri versions are evaluating the possibility of re-patching Arundhati's marriage. Whereas the Dravidian versions are more eager for Arundhati to have a fledgling career. Whereas the Kannada Arundhati is in a different zone altogether. There Goddess Durga has given darshan in her flesh to guide Arundhati through her troubles.

Issues across India are similar and yet different. However, one aspect unifies the diversity of Indian television — A dearth of original material. Just add one step of 'translate' between copy and paste. Would I recommend you to watch this series? Here is the thing, I began watching this serial around the one-eighty mark. Currently, it is hovering around three eighty. Going by my thirty-second routine, I have given it a good hundred minutes of my life for those two hundred odd episodes. It is ninety-nine minutes thirty seconds more than what the serial deserves. Plus, unlike me, you have the benefit of this article. I hope you have your answer.

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